

socialist review

Issue 32

For a democratic and socialist alternative

July 2010

OURS

\$2



NOT THEIRS

TAX

Oppose GST

Ours not mines

Anti-mining movement

FIFA

World Cup

WHERE WE STAND

Socialism

Capitalism is a system of crisis, exploitation and war in which production is for profit, not human need. Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over its production or distribution. A new society can only be built when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and create a new state in which they will make the decisions about the economy, social life and the environment.

Workers' Power

Only the working class has the power to create a society free from exploitation, oppression and want. Liberation can be won only through the struggles of workers themselves, organised independently of all other classes and fighting for real workers' power - a new kind of state based on democratically elected workers' councils. China and Cuba, like the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, have nothing to do with socialism. They are repressive state capitalist regimes. We support the struggles of workers against every ruling class.

Revolution Not Reformism

Despite the myth of parliamentary democracy, the structures of parliament, the army, the police and the judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class majority. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against workers. There is no parliamentary road to socialism.

Internationalism

Workers in every country are exploited by capitalism, so the struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We oppose everything that divides workers of different countries. We oppose all immigration controls. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose imperialism and support all genuine national liberation struggles.

Liberation From Oppression

We fight for democratic rights. We are opposed to the oppression of women, Maori, Pacific

Islanders, gays and lesbians. These forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. We support the right of all oppressed groups to organise for their own defence. All these forms of liberation are essential to socialism and impossible without it.

Tino Rangatiratanga

We support the struggle for tino rangatiratanga. Maori capitalists and politicians have no interest in achieving tino rangatiratanga for working class Maori. The Government and corporate warriors' approach to Treaty claims has benefited a Maori elite while doing little for working class Maori. Tino rangatiratanga cannot be achieved within capitalism. It will only become a reality with the establishment of a workers' state and socialist society.

Revolutionary Organisation

To achieve socialism, the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by day-to-day activity in the mass organisations of the working class. We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions. We are beginning to build such a party, linking the ideas of revolutionary socialism to workers' struggles against the system. If you agree with our ideas and want to fight for socialism, we urge you to join us.

GET INVOLVED!

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Ours, not theirs

The ruling class has a problem. For the past three decades their profits have been falling. Every recession has been deeper and more drawn out than the one before, and every recovery weaker. Right now, like many times over the past thirty years, we are in the worst recession since the 1930s.

But the ruling class won't go down without a fight. They are intent on squeezing every last drop of profit they can, from the third world, from the environment and from the working class.

Earlier this year, Minister of Resources Gerry Brownlee announced plans to allow mining companies access to our National Parks. In our lead article we look at the environmental devastation caused by mining, and look at the impact not only for tourism, but on waterways, the atmosphere and on workers in these mines. We also look at the influence of the powerful mining lobby on Australian politics, and how they react to even minor taxes on their profits.

We also look at how the government is selling the Canterbury environment down the river. By sacking the elected Regional Councilors, and bypassing water conservation orders, they are giving large-scale dairy conversions the green light at the expense of the regional water ecosystems.

And internationally, this year we have seen (and at the time of writing, are still seeing) one of the largest oil disasters in history.

The National Party is also making workers pay directly for propping up the lifestyles of the rich in New Zealand, by raising GST and cutting back on education and health in order to pay for a massive tax cut for the richest people in New Zealand. This recession has hit the ruling class hard, and they want us to pay for it.

Fighting Back

But this year we have also seen one of the largest protests in living memory as over 50,000 people marched through central Auckland opposing Brownlee's mining plans. This massive protest has since been backed up by a number of smaller protests in other centres, including Invercargill. As long as the National party continues with plans to mine our conservation estate, this protest movement will not go away. There will be more protests, and Socialists will be there supporting this movement.

There have also been large protests in Christchurch, with over 2000 people turning up in The Square to oppose the undemocratic removal of the Regional Councilors. Public outcry has forced the Government to back down on plans to introduce the draconian Search and Surveillance Bill, and we

have seen protests opposing the Israeli blockade of Gaza around the country.

Internationally, the Anti-Globalization movement staged demonstrations against the G20 meeting in Toronto. Thousands of protesters faced off against over 10,000 police to challenge the purpose and agenda of the G20 summit.

Keeping the red flag flying

Socialists have been at the front line of all these battles, from the mass protests in Toronto, to Gaza protest in Dunedin. And we'll be at the forefront of the next demonstration too. We fly the flag and show our colours as a signal, to students and workers, that next time the ruling class try to attack our environment, or force draconian laws on us, next time they try to oppress us, that we'll be there. The goal of the International Socialists and other socialist organizations in New Zealand and around the world is to build an organization that can lead the fight against capitalism, whether that fight is protecting our environment from destructive mining, or opposing the inhumane blockade of Gaza.

But in order to effectively lead this fight we need to organize. We need to make links with workers, environmentalists and community groups, so we can organize together. The best way to make those links is by walking the walk, by turning up in solidarity we show activists, students and workers who we are, and what we stand for; and we use these links to build the next campaign.



All eyes on the National Party

In about a year, there will be another election in New Zealand. For the past two years, the National Party has governed in a centre-right fashion. However, they have started to show that they really are wolves in sheep's clothing's.

During the recession, National has done nothing to promote job growth, as unemployment has soared. They have slashed over 1500 Public service jobs, with more to come. There have been tax cuts for the rich. They have also introduced a GST rise, claiming that they wish to reduce public debt and reassure investor confidence. However, this is entirely unhelpful for the working class, who yet again, are forced to pay for another capital crisis.

There has been some positive reactions from the working class. For example, National has had to withdraw its search and surveillance Bill, when the public were outraged by the proposed scheme. Furthermore, nearly half of the population is opposed to National's plans to destroy prime conservation land. Additionally, there has been widespread opposition against the Super City scheme, which destroys local democracy for the majority of Aucklanders. Finally, Key has had to keep his promise not to sell any public assets in his first term in office.

The leadership of the National party has been dismal. In terms of foreign policy, John Key has been particularly weak. He has sent more SAS troops to Afghanistan, even though it is a brutal war of occupation, opposed by the majority of Afghans. How long must we wait until New Zealand troops are killed in this senseless war.

Furthermore, Key has recently taken a swing at asylum seekers, as he reassured the New Australian Prime Minister that New Zealand would co-operate with its hard-line stance. Shame on Key for doing so, as the asylum seekers are perhaps the most vulnerable people on the planet. The majority of such asylum seekers meet the definition of a Refugee as under the Refugee Convention.

Expect the National Party to become more aggressive if it wins another term in office. We only have to look to Europe to see the direction that New Zealand is heading in. We don't need any more nonsense from Key, a multi millionaire, or his party of reactionary old boys. We need more solidarity from the working class, to offer an alternative to the misery of capitalism.

J Wright



Last year Gerry Brownlee announced plans to allow mining in areas protected as national parks. Such a move is part of a wider, full-scale assault on the environment. Mining threatens not only the national parks, the landscapes and the wildlife that they contain, but is expanding in every corner of the country and threatens the health of workers, their families and communities.

Mining destroys landscapes and ecosystems, pollutes waterways, kills wildlife and is a major contributor to global warming. It is one of the most destructive activities on the planet. Coal mines, like the new mines planned for Buller and Balclutha, are amongst the worst because of their contribution towards capitalism's insane dependence on fossil fuels. Burning coal creates carbon dioxide; a greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming. The amount of carbon dioxide emissions is strongly tied to global temperatures, and has risen approximately 35% since the 1990s. Unsurprisingly, above-average carbon dioxide emissions are found in the atmosphere above industrialized nations, discrediting the myth that global warming is a natural phenomenon. The burning of coal for electricity production contributes another 5.6 billion tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere every year – 20% of all greenhouse gas emissions.

Even when it isn't being burnt, coal can still cause greenhouse gas emissions. Much of the coal mined today, is lower-grade coal called lignite. 7.5 percent of lignite production is converted into synthetic fertilizers for use in industrial agriculture. In the north-eastern US, fertiliser made from lignite is used in the dairy industry, itself a major source of the greenhouse gas methane. It's not hard to imagine a similar situation arising in New Zealand, as more and more farms are converted to dairy.

Burning coal also contributes to acid rain. Acid rain pollutes waterways, kills fish, birdlife and plants,

as well as damaging buildings and leaching the soil of nutrients vital for plant growth and crop productivity. Whilst most coal plants are fuelled to remove the sulphur dioxide emissions that caused acid rain in the 70s and 80s, carbon dioxide emissions that are inevitable from burning fossil fuels are becoming a new source of acid rain.

The waste products of coal mining are also extremely toxic. Fly ash, bottom ash and boiler slag contains more than a dozen heavy metals. Acid mine drainage is a serious problem that has polluted many waterways on the West Coast, where waste from the mines literally turns streams and rivers black. If this weren't enough, coal contains trace amounts of radioactive material, which are released into the atmosphere when it is burned.

Finally on the environmental front, there is the destruction that mining wrecks on plant and animals and the land on which they live. Mines around New Zealand, threaten endangered species such as Archey's and Hochstetter's frogs in the Coromandel and Bay of Plenty, and the Powelliphanta land snails on the West Coast. In Aotearoa and Te Wai Pounamu, many of these species are found nowhere else, and once they are gone can never be brought back.

Trashing our Communities

Mining damages not only the planet, but the health and wellbeing of mine workers and their communities too. Mining remains one of the most dangerous industries for workers, even in developed nations. It

is the second most dangerous industry in New Zealand, after hunting and fishing. Approximately 900 injury claims were filed by miners in 2003, a rate of 235 per 1,000 workers.

The desire for profits drives mine operators – who are often already millionaires – to cut corners and endanger workers' safety. Pockets of deadly gasses, known as 'damps', are common in underground mines, and are prone to explode. In April this year, corporate pressure on workers to ignore safety regulations lead to an explosion at the Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia, USA, which cost the lives of 25 mine workers. Mine owners in New Zealand are playing the same game of cost-cutting and profit-raising as their US counterparts.

Prolonged inhalation of coal dust can result in a condition known as coalminers' pneumoconiosis, or 'black-lung disease'. Symptoms are similar to those experienced by heavy smokers and around 4,000 miners in the US are diagnosed with the disease – approximately ¼ of whom will die from the disease. Miners are also more prone to chronic bronchitis than other sections of the population, with industrial bronchitis affecting 16-17% of non-smoking coal miners.

It is not just the health of mine workers that is in danger – open-cast mining, the most common type of mining in New Zealand, puts the whole community at risk. Open cast mines emit large amounts of dust into the air, especially around transportation routes and where waste products of mining are dumped. Dust from mines may contain significant amounts of silica – one of the components of asbestos responsible for asbestosis and inhalation of the dust can cause symptoms similar to asbestosis, including coughing, shortness of breath, fevers and difficulty breathing. Authorities in towns close to mines – such as Nightcaps in Southland, or Waihi in the Coromandel, tend to dismiss medical claims arising from exposure to mine dust, and can hardly be relied on to adequately measure air quality, let alone control the mining companies.

Green Jobs, not Black Gold

National's argument that mining is needed to drag New Zealand out of the economic doldrums is a fraud. Mining is hardly likely to drag New Zealand out of recession, and the vast bulk of the profits will flow to the bosses at the top. It is nothing more than the self-interested crusade of selected capitalists that want to cash in on New Zealand's natural and human resources.

To really benefit local workers, their families and communities, a wholly different approach is needed. A first step would be to raise benefits, so that those laid off as a result of the economic downturn can still afford a decent standard of living. With raising benefits, there must also be a rise in minimum wage. Setting the minimum wage at \$15 an hour would ensure that all people who are working can afford to live, and would see more money flow back into peoples' homes and communities, where it belongs.

Programs for installing insulation and better heating in homes could go a long way towards reducing the need for coal-generated electricity, and save working families money that could be better spent on other things. Health benefits also come from having adequately heated homes.

A better system for electricity distribution is also badly needed. Currently domestic consumers are facing price hikes while industrial interests, such as the Bluff Aluminium Smelter, use masses of electricity at discounted rates. Cutting the subsidies and taxing the rich will provide more money to invest back into people and communities. Solar hot-water heaters could be installed in every home as a clean way providing energy to domestic consumers. Reduced costs for households would also increase the efficiency of electricity use – allowing families to heat their whole homes through central heating, rather than heating only one room through inefficient but more easily switched-off personal heaters.

Investing in things like proper insulation, central heating in homes and solar panels for houses would also create sustainable jobs, as people will be needed to install and maintain these systems. And they're guaranteed to be local. Free education and training would encourage people to take up the new trades, and ensure that such "green-collar" jobs are well paid.

Further jobs could be created and better systems invented through research into housing design. Polytechnic research grants would allow for research to be done at the point of service and make well paid jobs more available to local and working people.

Socialism is the Solution

Many of these proposals are obvious and can be implemented immediately. The reason they are not is because they do not serve the interests of the rich and powerful. The exploitation of workers and the of the environment are the very sources of their power. At one and the same time, capitalism breaks up communities into autonomous individuals, pushing them towards the outside whilst concentrating ever-greater amounts of wealth in massive factory complexes and a centralized power-generation system. Shifting power back into communities and creating better forms of living, therefore, goes against the whole grain of the established society and will require a revolutionary struggle. Current institutions and political parties that look towards change through them are of no use to us. We need to build new organs of struggle that directly organize the masses of working people in the fight for a better and more fair world, the fight for the future.

Cory Anderson



Southern anti-mining protest

The ISO contingent to Invercargill left Dunedin early. The protest promised to be a good one, it was symbolic, there had been a fair amount of advertising, we knew people who were going... But it had been organized by both the labour party and the greens. We couldn't know what to expect.

It was cold when we arrived, the roads on the way were icy but the sun was out. We were there, on time, but no-one else was. All there was was a coffee-guy van. Not too promising. After twenty minutes of standing around though, people started to arrive. The seven to ten people who had just got there were labour party and supporters. But they looked like they were going out on a Sunday stroll. They acknowledged us but were wary to talk to us. We had our flags with us and megaphones and we were giving out leaflets to passers by; they were standing there, rubbing their hands for warmth. Slowly more people started to gather, and as they did the 'organizers' came up to us to talk. The organizers must have been the caucus of the old, quite conservative and powerless labour party of the city. I don't think there was a single green there. Around this time around forty protesters had gathered. Ten were ISO and another ten also came from Dunedin but belonged to the activist anarchist and green groups. The organizers told us that they had democratically decided to have a silent protest. They said it was symbolic, that there would be a tape with bird calls singing so the media would be able to see what we'd lose if our forests were mined. How beautiful. These people had obviously not protested in the last fifty years, if ever. This won't work we told them. We said we needed chants and shouting to get the attention of the media and maybe at the end we could have the bird calls. No, they said, they had decided it democratically. After much deliberating we did reach a consensus, we'd chant and shout for the last 200 metres of the protest.

There were about 250-300 of us when we started marching in silence. It wasn't working. There was no cohesion; if it weren't for the placards we'd have looked like a group of circus freaks waving colourful flags, escorted by a police car that was going too fast and a TV crew that wasn't even filming us. As for the bird calls, no-one but the green-party member holding the stereo player heard them, and I was only a couple of metres ahead of her. In a protest like this, especially in a city like Invercargill you want people to notice you and be aware of what is happening. You want people to get off their desks to see that there are people here against mining; hundreds of people, even though Invercargill is a national stronghold. Instead the bird-calls were drowned by the engines and tooting of cars and the chatter of the protesters themselves.

At last at Dee street we were able to vent our frustrations. Everyone, from young to old, joined in in our chants with fists punching in the air. Even the organizers joined in. People waved at us from shops and some even decided to march with us. We all felt united when we got to the square where speeches would be made. Albeit the speeches were poor and rhetorical. They talked about it being a privilege, to have national parks so close. They didn't talk about how Southland would become peppered with even more ghost towns or how the mining companies would be stealing public land to fill-up private bank accounts. Clearly the Labour and Greens didn't have their arguments together. Clearly they were looking for votes for the upcoming elections and clearly they were too scared of being shown down again by us as they didn't even let us talk at the end of the protest. So much for democracy. The protest was a success for us though. We showed our power in a city other than Dunedin, we proved we can send delegations of activists out into other cities and know they'll do a good job. We also taught the greens and labour a lesson, next protest in Invercargill will have shouting and megaphones and banners and flags and young and old joining in. Next one will be much bigger than this one.

Daniel Benson

Environment Canterbury

Selling the environment down the river



In March, the central government sacked the elected representatives of Canterbury and replaced them with appointed commissioners. These commissioners will remain in place until at least 2013, during which the residents of Canterbury will have little to no say in how their water is allocated.

This move was met by major outcry from Cantabrians, with hundreds turning out to a protest in April, and over 2000 protesting in Cathedral Square in June.

Canterbury Agriculture

Canterbury accounts for just 20% of agricultural area in New Zealand but makes up about 70% of the irrigated land. This is because the region is characterized by large amounts of dry farmland, and a number of large rivers. This means that while the land is not naturally suited for dairy farming, dairy conversions are possible with massive irrigation projects.

The high worldwide demand for milk solids, and

the resulting high milk payout, has led many Canterbury farmers to seek resource consent to irrigate from these large rivers. But with more and more farms seeking consent, many rivers simply do not have enough water to cater for all the proposed projects.

Town vs Country

Canterbury also contains New Zealand's second largest city: Christchurch, and it is this population centre which has been voicing opposition to the large scale dairy conversions happening in the rural areas.

Christchurch residents not only rely on the Canterbury rivers for recreational activities like fishing, camping and boating, but many towns rely on them for their water supply. In addition to this runoff from farms is reaching the point where it is starting to affect the underground aquifers that Christchurch city depends upon for its water supply.

The Regional Council has found its self split between the powerful farming lobby, and environmental concerns of its urban constituents.

But more fundamentally, unlike in other key agricultural regions, Christchurch is not dependant on agriculture for its economy. When world milk prices are high, and farmers are reaping the profits, the urban population does not see any benefits. In fact, since we pay the international market rate for our milk, high returns for farmers means high grocery bills for workers.

These oppositional interests and the key role that water plays in the region have meant that almost 20 years after the passing of the Resource Management Act, Environment Canterbury has yet to settle on a water plan. It is this lack of a water plan which the central government seized upon in order to sack the council.

International Finance and the 2008 food crisis

The increase in dairy farming is driven by the international market price for milk solids. However, due to the influence of international finance, this

price bares little relation to the actual demand for their product.

In order to protect themselves against risk, farmers have been able to negotiate prices in advance of them actually delivering a product. For example, farmer Giles can agree in January to sell milk solids to a trader in August at a fixed price. If he has a great summer, he'll lose some cash, but if there's a lousy summer or the global price collapses, he'll do well from the deal. This however, led to the creation of a derivatives (or "futures") market for food products, including milk solids.

So when the housing market began to collapse in 2006, financial speculators started looking for new places to put their money. This was great news for the dairy industry, as this speculation raised the international market price for their product. This speculation increased until mid 2008 when international food prices got so high that they actually priced much of the third world out of the market!

The result of this was the 2008 food crisis, where there was mass starvation in countries like Haiti, and in New Zealand, dairy farmers were stung by a "lower than expected" payout from Fonterra.

However, much like the housing bubble, the food bubble didn't completely burst. International prices for milk solids are still very high, and dairy conversions are still an attractive investment for farmers who can secure the necessary irrigation.

It is this high milk price that the government is looking at when they move to streamline the process for farmers to convert to dairying.

Sustainable development

Intensive dairying like we are seeing in Canterbury is only possible because of the inflated price of milk solids, and because farmers are able to externalize their costs into the environment. By "streamlining" the consents process in favour of more irrigation, the government is putting short term profits above the long term sustainability of the region.

Chris Baxter

Join the Struggle

Socialist Review is a magazine produced by the International Socialist Organisation Aotearoa. It aims to provide quality political analysis that represents the interests of the working class majority in New Zealand. But unlike "alternative" media sources, we don't aim simply to provide an "antidote" to the corporate lies, imperialist wars, oppression and inequality that dominate the global landscape; we aim to put them into historical and economic context, to draw links between the various issues and the global capitalist system, and analyse what they mean for ordinary working people and the working class movement, both at home and abroad. To do this we try and maintain a healthy balance of domestic and international issues.

We also practice what we preach, and support the working class movement whenever we can, with the long-term aim of building an organisation that can provide the working class with political leadership in times of upheaval. If you're interested in our politics and want to know how you can get involved, please phone or text 027 606 9549 or email: contact@iso.org.nz or visit our website: www.iso.org.nz

The mining companies are full of it

The mining companies should pay more tax. A lot more.

The new prime minister, however, has called a truce with the mining industry over the government's proposed Resource Super Profits Tax (RSPT). She has declared that the government wants to negotiate in good faith with the industry.

There should be nothing to negotiate. Until now, the Minerals Council of Australia has waged a vicious campaign against the government over the tax. It isn't the first time the mining industry has campaigned against this government – the mining industry was at the forefront of opposition to scrapping AWAs and of opposition to an emissions trading scheme – but it is the most substantial campaign waged by a section of capital against a sitting government in decades.

Yet somehow, Labor has allowed this bunch of thieving multinational corporations to pass themselves off as battlers; they have been able to convince many that they are being ripped off by the government after doing all the hard work making the nation prosperous.

The mining companies tell us that they provide the jobs and that they are the real guarantors of our future collective prosperity. The government, they say, is threatening this by proposing that giant mining firms pay more tax.

But their campaign peddles myths to back up their claims:

Firstly, there is the myth that the resources sector single-handedly saved the country during the global financial crisis. This is the "buttering up myth": it serves to overstate the importance of mining to total economic activity. In so doing, it makes the fortunes of the country seem more dependent on the industry than is actually the case.

No doubt resources exports did play a role in buffering Australia from the crisis, but the impact of the resource sector in propping up Australian growth is overstated.

Western Australia and Queensland, which account for 74 per cent of total mining sector output, grew 0.7 per cent and 0.3 per cent respectively in the crisis year of 2008-09 (in terms of growth per person both declined by over 2 per cent) – lower than the national average. It was the Northern Territory, Tasmania, South Australia and the ACT that grew faster than the national average. After them came Victoria.

The mining industry shed around 15 per cent of its workforce in the first six months of 2009. According to Treasury Secretary Ken Henry, "had every industry behaved that way [the] unemployment rate would have climbed to 19 per cent."

While resources dominate the Australian export trade in volume and value terms, the industry's share of total employment is tiny – less than 2 per cent. In the last six months, over 14,000 mining jobs were created. But 40,000 were created in construction and 24,000 in the health sector.

Having buttered everyone up, we are sold a second myth: that mining companies pay their fair share of tax. Looking at both the company level and

at the level of individual executives shows this to be ridiculous.

Currently, mining companies pay a combination of tax and royalties. The surging price of commodities, however, means that royalty payments decline as a proportion of the total value of the resources. Socialist Alternative articles don't usually quote the federal Treasurer favourably, but here is an exception, with Wayne Swan making the case for higher taxes and a move away from royalties:

"At the beginning of 2010, the contract price of coking coal was around \$163 per tonne. At this price, the royalty payable by a mining company digging up coal in Queensland is \$13.30 per tonne.

"A few months ago another round of contract negotiations took place between mining companies and their overseas buyers, and reports suggest that coking coal contract prices were settled at around \$US200 per tonne, or roughly \$225 per tonne in Australian dollars. At this price, the royalty payable is \$19.50 per tonne.

"This means that under the current system of royalties, \$55.80 of the \$62 per tonne increase in price goes to the mining company, with the royalty payable increasing by only \$6.20 per tonne."

An example which undermines the Minerals Council's myth is that of copper mining. In Western Australia the effective tax rate on copper mining is ranked second lowest out of 23 countries listed by the OECD.

Figures released by the Australian Treasury show that resource profits increased from \$A40 billion in 2008 to \$91 billion in 2009. According to the Australian Council of Trade Unions, pre-tax profits for the mining industry have increased by 530 per cent over the course of a decade – "more than eight times the rate of wages growth for mining workers."

Treasury data also shows that in 2000 resources taxes paid as a percentage of profits stood at 64 per cent. Yet by 2009 this share had plummeted to 27 per cent.

The profits individual mining companies accrue each year under the current system are obscene: according to Citi Investment Bank research, BHP's profit is projected to rise from \$US10.7 billion in 2009 to \$US23.5 billion in 2010, while Rio Tinto's profit is predicted to rise from \$US6.3 billion to \$US15.7 billion in 2011.

But it's not just their profits in total, it's the profit margins. The latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that the profit margin in the mining industry is the highest in the country – 37 per cent compared with an average of 11 per cent.

As BRW's annual rich list revealed, Australia's richest mining bosses increased their personal fortunes by \$9 billion in the past 12 months. There is nothing "fair" about this. The mining bosses did not lift a shovel for that cash.

In fact, once the mineral wealth has been depleted, these companies and their executives will simply shut up shop and go somewhere else or do something else. Having lined their pockets, they will leave nothing but gaping holes in the ground. For that, they can surely pay more tax.

The third myth is that raising taxes will lead to the mining companies investing elsewhere. The



Clive Palmer: crying poor

Minerals Council quotes the World Bank as authority on this point: "If the net effect of the overall tax system is too great (too high an effective tax rate), an investor may shift its focus to a lower taxing jurisdiction."

Translated into English (and not withstanding that the effective tax rate, as noted above, is now quite low) this means that the country will be destroyed if mining companies have to pay more tax.

The mining industry, however, is very different from for example the textile industry. Resources are non-renewable. They sit in the ground in various parts of the world until they are dug up. Once they have been dug up, they are gone.

This isn't rocket science – mining companies can scour the world for deposits, but they can only invest where the deposits are actually located.

Australia has over 30 per cent of the world's lead, uranium and nickel, over 20 per cent of its silver, brown coal, bauxite, cobalt and zinc, and over 15 per cent of its iron ore and industrial diamonds.

The reality is that mining companies have been ripping the guts out of the Australian continent for decades and pocketing the rewards. If in some far-off universe it becomes unprofitable to do so and they decide to have a capital strike to hold the country to ransom, then the government should nationalise the lot of them.

Actually, they should just do it now and save us all the constant whinging that comes out of the mouths of Twiggy Forrest and Clive Palmer. Let's see them get a job like everyone else.

The myths peddled by the mining industry are, as the mining union points out, ritually peddled by rich and powerful industry leaders whenever there is a threat that they hand back some of their profits.

This time, however, the mining bosses have not simply complained. They have done all they can to destabilise and undermine the government through their media campaign.

Yet Gillard, touted by all the insiders as "no push over", has begun her prime ministership by immediately dodging a fight with those who want to see the government fall. She has given them an open door.

It should have been slammed in their faces.
Ben Hillier

Oppose the GST increase

Last month the government presented its second budget. For the most part it was a typical right wing budget: lots of corporate welfare, funding for police and prisons, and of course thinly disguised cuts to health, welfare and education.

But this budget also contained the largest tax "reform" in 25 years.

Income and Company tax as we know it was introduced in New Zealand in 1891 with the Land and Income Tax Act. Prior to that there were trade tariffs, and levees etc, but this was the first real tax on the ruling class of New Zealand. Initially, the Income tax ranged from around 30 to 50%. It was instituted by the Liberal party government, and was seen as pretty progressive. Notably there was quite a high exemption amount, so many workers were unaffected.

Around this time there was a strong working class movement, and again after world war one, in 1920, there were campaigns for increasing the company tax rate, especially for capitalists who had profited excessively out of the War. One proposal was for an "Excess Profits Tax" of 75%

So it was on the back of this working class movement that the First Labor government was brought to power. Between 1939 and 1949 they raised the top tax rate from 42.9% to 76.5%.

It was later lowered, by the National Government, to 66% where it remained until the mid 1980s

So that's the ancient history part. The take home message here is that for the majority of our history we, like much of the rest of the world, had a top income tax rate well in excess of 50%. There will be

more on the significance of that later in this article, but for now, just take note that the "unbearably high" 39% rate that we recently had is historically very low.

Rogernomics

It has been said that this tax package is the largest tax reform in 25 years, so what happened 25 years ago?

In one word: Neo-Liberalism.

The permanent arms economy that had propped up most of the world through the 1950s and 1960s began to come to an end in the early 1970s. And by the latter part of that decade the ruling classes of the world had become painfully aware that the Boom and Bust cycle, and crucially the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, were reasserting themselves.

Their response was to burn all their Keynesian economics textbooks, and adopt the new big thing. In the US it was called Reaganomics, In Britain it was called Thatcherism, and here it was Rogernomics.

Basically the idea was, and apparently still is, to prop up the rate of profit by passing as many costs as possible on to the working class.

So part of this was a major tax reform. They slashed the company tax rate, and between 1986 and 1989 halved the top income

tax rate from 66% to 33%.

To cover part of the cost of this, they introduced GST. It was initially set at 10% and was promised to be a temporary measure to overcome the government deficit. In 1989 GST was increased to 12.5%

This was backed by vicious attacks on workers, exemplified by the Employment Contracts Act passed by the National Government in 1991. This has meant that over the past three decades, real wages have steadily decreased and working hours have increased.

So overall, this meant that the cost of doing business in New Zealand fell dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s. And today we're still near the top

of the list of OECD countries with a low cost of doing business.

Rate of profit

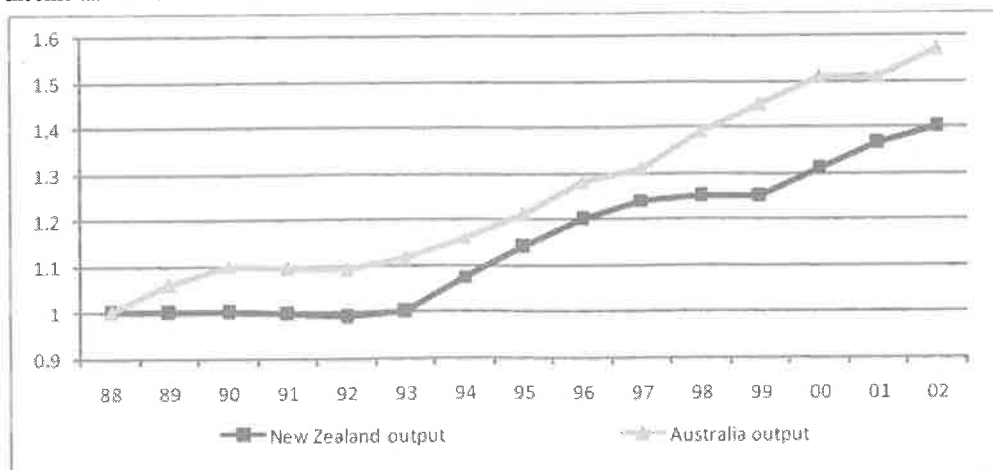
Beginning with the labour theory of value, Marx argued that only living labour could create new value. While raw materials and machinery do contribute to the value of a product, they do so by transferring to it the value of the human labour embodied in their own production, i.e. a constant amount, which is why Marx calls this "constant capital". On the other hand, workers create new value, as they produce not only enough to pay for their own wages, but continue to produce beyond that point. Hence Marx calls this "variable capital". This surplus value that workers produce is the source of profit.

But one of the contradictions of capitalism is that the rate of profit, i.e. the rate of return on investment, is continually undermined by competition. Competition forces capitalists to constantly reinvest their profits into more efficient means of production. Capitalists who invest in new labour-saving technology are able to produce more cheaply than their rivals, so their rate of profit goes up at the expense of those rivals. Competition forces the others to invest in the new technology if they want to stay in business, so eventually the investment in constant capital across the whole industry goes up. This raises the "organic composition of capital", i.e. the ratio between constant and variable capital. But as only variable capital can create new value, the process has squeezed the source of profit. Capitalists have to put more and more of the investable surplus into constant capital. Not to do so means they cannot compete with those who have invested in it. But to do so undermines the rate of profit for every capitalist.

A good recent example of this can be seen in the consumer electronic market. Ten years ago digital cameras were the just becoming mainstream. And there was a race to fabricate smaller and smaller photoelectric cells – to produce cameras with more megapixels than the competition. So when everyone was selling one megapixel cameras, the first company to bring in two megapixel cameras could cash in on being the best in the market, and realise the profits from their new technology. But then, of course, pretty soon everyone was selling two megapixel cameras – then three megapixels, and the price fell. Nowadays everyone wants a three or four megapixel camera in their cell phone, and the perceived value has dropped accordingly. Even though they can't make the same profits, the camera manufacturers still have to buy the big four megapixel fabrication plants. They still have to spend millions of dollars on that constant capital even though the profit they get for it is the same as when everyone was making the crappy old one megapixel cameras.

Marx's analysis points out various countervailing factors to this tendency for the rate of profit to fall. One important example is Class Struggle. If employers are able to drive down wages and increase the rate of exploitation of the workers they employ then this struggle itself can help hold up the rate of profit

If employers are able to drive down wages and increase the rate of exploitation of the workers they employ then this struggle itself can help hold up the rate of profit



New Zealand and Australia labour output (relative to each country's 1988 level). We can see that both countries have seen a similar growth over the past 20 years, however when we compare with the capital-labour ratio chart to the right, we can see that while Australia's growth closely corresponds with increased capital reinvestment, New Zealand's growth has been almost entirely off the back of the working class (source: Treasury)

GST INCREASE

And this is what's been happening in New Zealand for the past 25 years. By increasing working hours, and passing off as many costs as possible to New Zealand workers, our ruling class have been able to remain competitive with only minimal reinvestment.

But there's only so far that can go. There is a limit to how much a worker can be exploited, and the capitalists have been hitting that limit for the past few years. This is why productivity is the big buzzword in economics at the moment.

The arguments for tax reform

For the next part of this article, I'll get on to a few Right-wing arguments for the current tax reforms. I'll keep it pretty short, so I've just picked three. Two of them are completely absurd, and other's got a bit more depth to it. But I think they're all pretty illustrative.

So I'll start with the most stupid, and we'll work our way up.

But all the rich people will leave the country if we tax them too much.

Firstly in the just plain dumb category, there's the government's argument that the rich will all run away to Australia, or wherever, if we don't give them a tax cut.

Two quick points here: Firstly, the top tax rate in Australia is 45% and in the UK it's 50%. But more importantly, the people they mention are doctors, scientists and engineers. If the national party really cared about doctors they wouldn't be cutting health funding. If they really cared about science, they wouldn't be cutting

education. The income tax cuts aren't aimed at people earning \$70,000 a year, they're aimed at people earning \$700,000 per year.

The point is all workers, even well paid professionals, benefit far more from a pay rise, or a cut to the bottom tax brackets than they ever will for a cut to the top tax bracket.

Tax cuts are an incentive to work harder

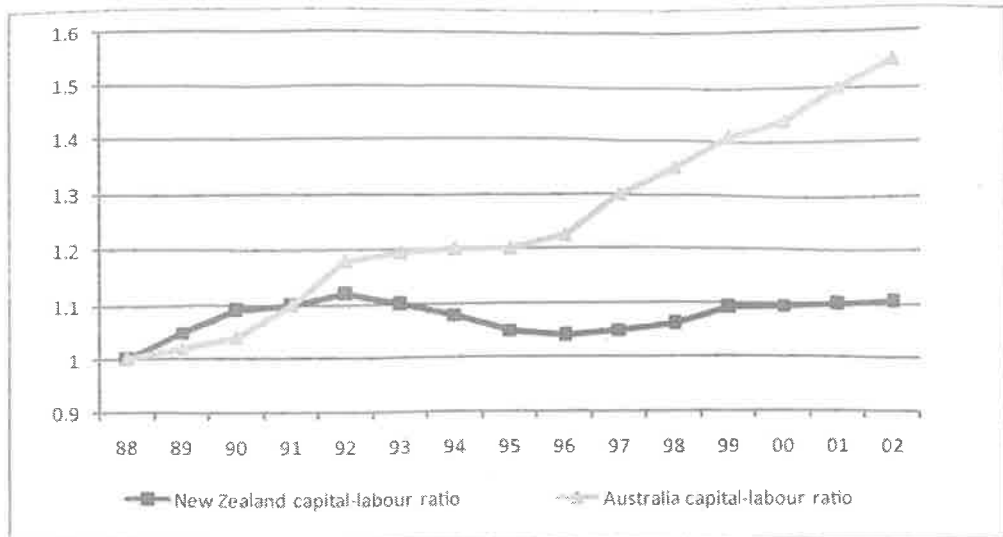
Secondly in the completely absurd category, there was the national party's argument that these tax cuts are an incentive for us to work a bit harder to get ahead.

This was actually part of John Key's post budget address! The fact that they even tried to make that argument shows just how out of touch the National Party is with the working class.

Right now the vast majority of working people are in one of two situations. Either we're on a salary desperately trying to work enough hours of unpaid overtime to keep off the radar of the next round of redundancies, or we're on a wage desperately trying to get enough hours of overtime (or even regular time) to pay the power bill.

Were sure as hell not sitting around idle, refusing to work just to spite the tax man.

But here's the serious point. For the past 25 years, real wages have fallen dramatically, and working hours have increased. Because of anti-union laws, and anti worker laws like the Employment Contracts act in 1991, the ruling class has been able to prop up



Comparing capital-labour ratios in Australia and New Zealand. The Australian economy has seen a far greater level of capital reinvestment over the past 20 years, and this has resulted in a higher level of labour productivity. (source: Treasury)

their profits with cheap, and unproductive, labour. That's meant that the ruling class of New Zealand has got away without investing in capital, without the innovation necessary to improve our productivity.

But lowering the tax burden will result in more investment

The last argument that I wanted to address was the Argument that lowering the company tax rate will bring wonderful investment into New Zealand.

Now this is interesting, because it brings back the idea of productivity.

Basically, conventional economic theory has it that any investment opportunity that offers more than a certain rate of return in any given conditions will attract investment. So lowering the company tax rate will only promote investment in the most marginally profitable areas.

Basically this means that most successful businesses won't see increased investment, since they're

already returning a profit. Only the most marginally profitable businesses will gain from this tax cut.

This isn't a recipe for the next TradeMe, or Google, it's a recipe for low wage, low capital, low productivity sweatshops.

What do socialists say about taxation

Our demand is simple: we completely oppose all taxes on working people. The ruling class should pay all taxes.

There's three different arguments that I'm going to make for this.

Firstly we can look at it from the theory of the state in relation to class struggle. Briefly, the theory goes, quoting Lenin's State and Revolution: "the ancient and feudal states were organs for the exploitation of the slaves and serfs; likewise, the modern representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage-labour by capital."

So following this argument, it's their State and they can bloody well pay for it themselves!

Or I could argue from a worker's perspective that a Tax cut is equivalent to a pay rise. Therefore, since we're unequivocally in favour of wage rises for workers, we should therefore be in favour of tax cuts for workers.

Now I just want to be perfectly clear here, this should not be mistaken for a libertarian argument. Education, healthcare, social welfare are all worker's demands. Regardless who pays for them they are all concessions that we have won from the ruling class through struggle. Don't ever make the mistake of thinking that they are just our "fair share" of tax spending.

Productivity

But the final argument I want to make here is about productivity.

I've mentioned productivity and innovation a few times in this article. Having low wages and benefits allows capitalists to get away with being lazy. Why invest in more machinery when you can just get your workers to work for longer?

Having low taxes just encourages more of this marginal investment. But the reverse is also true. As Socialists, we demand higher wages, better working conditions, and better public services. These are working class demands. We make them to improve the lives of the vast majority of New Zealanders who are part of the working class.

But these demands are also good for the capitalist economy (if not the individual capitalists). By removing the option of these marginal investments, we can force the ruling class to innovate.

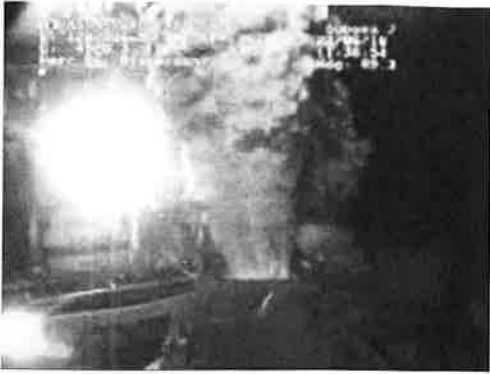
Countries like Australia, who have had a stronger trade union movement than here, have been able to force their ruling class to pay higher wages, and more tax. The results of this show up in their productivity rate, and their capitalization rate.

This year's budget will not "close the gap" with Australia. It will not lead to more investment and higher wages. What it will lead to is more of the same: longer working hours and lower wages for working New Zealanders.

The International Socialists completely oppose raising GST. This is a tax on workers equivalent to a pay cut, and it's there to fund a tax cut to the ruling class.

Chris Baxter

The making of an eco-catastrophe



Chris Williams, author of the newly released book *Ecology and Socialism: Solutions to Capitalist Ecological Crisis*, describes what led to the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

Almost everything you need to know about the warped priorities of capitalism is contained in the following contradiction: Unprecedented national resources were marshaled to fight a war for oil in the Persian Gulf, yet an oil spill on our doorstep in the Gulf of Mexico is left to gush for weeks.

Two months into the disastrous spill from the Deepwater Horizon well, and BP is still clueless about what to do, as it announces one half-baked plan after another and is essentially allowed to get on with it.

But as Joseph Romm pointed out on his Climate Progress blog, "spill" hardly describes what's going on. People "spill" coffee, but hundreds of thousands of gallons of oil pouring into the waters of the Gulf of Mexico at a rate of perhaps 100,000 barrels a day isn't really the same thing. A volcano of oil seems a more appropriate term.

BP's ineptitude in stopping the flow of oil contrasts sharply with its astounding technological ability to discover and drill for more. In September of last year, BP stocks rose when the company discovered a "massive" new oilfield in the Gulf.

But the unfolding catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico is far more than an indictment of BP, Transocean and Halliburton--though the CEOs of those companies should certainly be facing trial for criminal negligence and manslaughter.

Government regulation of the industry by the Interior Department's Mineral Management Service (MMS) doesn't even deserve the word "oversight." And with President Barack Obama announcing that he would open the whole east coast and the Alaska coast to offshore drilling, it's obvious the responsibility lies with government, too.

Ultimately, however, this is about the priorities of the capitalist system itself. The drive for profit ensured that these different economic, governmental and political actors felt compelled to take appalling decisions--treating human life as disposable while demonstrating the most callous contempt for the environment.

The basic story is this: BP, Transocean and Halliburton saw a legitimate (by capitalist standards)

source of profit maximization. These corporations were then encouraged to cut corners on health, safety and environmental regulations by a government agency that they knew was never going to call them to account.

They were given further encouragement by a supposedly "environment-conscious" president who had just authorized virtually unlimited offshore drilling, declaring a few weeks before the disaster, "It turns out, by the way, that oil rigs today generally don't cause spills. They are technologically very advanced."

The more that is uncovered about the situation, the more despicable it appears.

Most of the oil that spewed into the Gulf is still below the surface. Scientists have reported giant plumes of oil underwater, running up to 10 miles long by 3 miles wide by 300 feet thick. Apart from the cancer-causing nature of many of the compounds in the oil in the first place, these concentrations are going to deplete oxygen from the water and create massive dead zones in the Gulf, toxic to all aquatic life that depends on oxygen.

Furthermore, BP has so far put almost a million gallons of toxic dispersant into the Gulf. The dispersant it has been using, Corexit, has been shown to be less effective and more toxic than alternatives. But it's cheaper--and, lo and behold, it's manufactured by a company called Nalco, which has an ex-BP member on its board. Corexit has never been used in such quantities before--which prompted Environmental Protection Agency head Lisa Jackson to say: "I'm amazed by how little science there is on this issue."

As Democratic Rep. Jerry Nadler asked during congressional hearings: "Why would you use something that is much more toxic and much less effective, other than you have a corporate relationship with the manufacturer?"

A number of experts now believe that BP, in its effort just to disperse the oil on the surface so it doesn't provide a photo opportunity for the media, may be making the problem worse. Dispersants are mutagenic, carcinogenic and toxic. They break the oil up into droplets the same size as the food particles ingested by filter feeders such as oyster and shrimp, which will therefore treat the oil drops as food.

Nobody has any idea what the outcome of this experiment on ocean life in the Gulf will be, but I think it's fair to say it won't be good. As Carys Mitchelmore of the University of Maryland's Chesapeake Biological Laboratory commented: "Fish can ingest oil particles that then stick to their gills. It's like coating our lungs in oil. They aren't going to breathe too well, and we wouldn't either."

What kind of environment is BP pouring oil and dispersants into? Nearly three-quarters of all U.S. waterfowl and all of its 110 species of migratory neotropical songbirds use Louisiana's 3 million acres of wetlands to rest or nest. During the first two weeks of May, 25 million songbirds cross the Gulf every day.

This is also the most vital season for the Gulf's fisheries--oysters have just started to reproduce, speckled brown trout have started spawning, shrimp have just begun to grow. Nine out of 10 of the region's marine species rely on the wetlands at some point in their lifecycle. These areas comprise 40

percent of the country's total wetlands, and Louisiana produces more fish and seafood than any other state except Alaska. Fishing is now banned over one-third of the Gulf.

Fail Safety

What about all those fail-safe devices that were supposed to kick in and stop a catastrophe like this from happening in the first place? With all its cost-cutting and nickel-and-diming on safety, BP seems to have almost gone out of its way to make sure this was an accident waiting to happen.

According to testimony before Congress, the so-called blowout preventers, which were supposed to be the last-ditch mechanism against an explosion on the Deepwater rig, had 260 ways they could fail. As Democratic Rep. Bart Stupak asked at the hearings: "How can a device that has 260 failure modes be considered fail-safe?"

When did BP and other operators know that there were problems with the blowout preventers? Ten years ago. In 2000, the Interior Department's MMS published a report warning that there were several difficulties connected to deepwater well control, and that a blowout could be "a potential show-stopper."

Until 10 years ago, drilling for oil so deep--the Deepwater Horizon well lies more than a mile below the surface--was virtually unheard of. To give people an idea of how deep this is, naval submarines can't go below 900 yards because they are crushed by the water pressure. Where BP is drilling is more than 1,500 yards beneath the surface.

Four years after that first warning, in 2004, the MMS had a report prepared which concluded that while drilling technology had advanced, safety technology had stagnated--it again highlighted blowout control as a particular concern.

In 2008, the Society of Petroleum Engineers warned in a report that the blowout preventers might not be able to cut through the drill pipe in the event of a deepwater blowout. The report's authors included people working for Transocean and BP.

Between 1992 and 1998, there were 319 failures of blowout preventers found in U.S. offshore drilling, an average of 45 a year. Between 1992 and 2006, there were at least 39 blowouts off the U.S. coastline, 38 of them in the Gulf of Mexico.

Meanwhile, the spill response plan that BP filed with the MMS--and which the MMS approved--had the most idiotic mistakes. It declared that in the event of a spill, BP would consult with a local expert who had been dead for several years, and it cited the need to protect animals such as walrus and seals--which, of course, haven't been seen within hundreds of miles of the Gulf since the last Ice Age, but which do inhabit Alaska, suggesting that the company simply copied its disaster plan for another part of the world.

Despite this, MMS issued BP with a "categorical exclusion" from all environmental reviews under the U.S. National Environmental Policy Act. These exclusions are only meant to occur when projects are likely to have minimal or nonexistent environmental damage. Hundreds of these waivers have been handed out by MMS for Gulf drilling operations.

Two years ago, MMS itself was investigated by the Interior Department for its "too cozy"

relationship with the oil industry. Earl Devaney, the Interior Department inspector general who oversaw the investigation, found a culture of corruption in which employees rigged contracts, engaged in illegal moonlighting, took gifts from oil company employees, and engaged in sex and drug parties with oil executives. MMS was described in the Interior Department's report as an "ethical wasteland."

Hiding The Spill

SINCE THE explosion, government agencies and officials have worked in tandem with BP to hide the true extent of the spill from the world. Dickenson continued:

[T]he disaster in the Gulf was preceded by ample warnings--yet the administration had ignored them. Instead of cracking down on MMS, as he had vowed to do even before taking office, Obama left in place many of the top officials who oversaw the agency's culture of corruption. He permitted it to rubber-stamp dangerous drilling operations by BP--a firm with the worst safety record of any oil company--with virtually no environmental safeguards, using industry-friendly regulations drafted during the Bush years.

He calibrated his response to the Gulf spill based on flawed and misleading estimates from BP--and then deployed his top aides to lowball the flow rate at a laughable 5,000 barrels a day, long after the best science made clear this catastrophe would eclipse the Exxon Valdez.

Within hours of the explosion, government scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration were privately estimating oil flow rates of 64,000 to 110,000 barrels per day, even as federal officials publicly said the rate was only 1,000 5,000 barrels per day.

This should therefore be seen as a national political scandal--our elected government sought to deceive the public about the extent of the crisis. This deception reached absurd lengths. According to the New York Times: "Anderson Cooper of CNN complained about seemingly ridiculous efforts to control the story, including the fact that rescued oil-covered birds were being guarded and hidden from view by members of the National Guard."

Imagine if the collusion between the government and BP to manage the news and minimize the scale of the environmental catastrophe in the Gulf had been exposed when George W. Bush was still president? The level of anger and outrage from liberal groups and large environmental organizations would have been on a vastly different scale.

But so far, despite a significant drop in his popularity overall, Obama and the government are not being held accountable in the way they certainly deserve. That was a point made by Arizona Democratic Rep. Raul Grijalva, who oversees the Interior Department as chair of the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands:

People are being really circumspect, not pointing the finger at Salazar and Obama...But the troublesome point is, the administration knew that it had this rot in the middle of the process on offshore drilling--yet it empowered an already discredited, disgraced agency to essentially be in charge.

Still, anger from ordinary people toward Obama's lack of action and the long delay in holding BP's feet to the fire is on the rise. One sign appearing in

Louisiana captures the mood perfectly: "President Obama, BP stole my money. Where's my change?"

The parallels with the recent mining disaster at the Upper Big Branch mine in April that killed 29 miners are striking. At that time, Don Blankenship, CEO of Massey Energy, told ABC News: "We have lots of regulators in the industry, probably more regulators in the coal industry than any other industry in the country, and the Mine Safety and Health Administration, the state agencies, all the safety people we have on hand felt this was a safe coal mine...At the Massey level, we're doing everything we can to make all of our mines as safe as we can."

In reality, Blankenship is an infamous global warming denier and his company is also a serial breaker of health and safety regulations. The lax oversight and disregard for the welfare of its workers at the Upper Big Branch mine is a mirror image of BP's efforts to maximize profits over all other concerns.

Since 1995, Massey has been cited for 3,007 safety violations and more than \$2.2 million in fines, most of which it has contested. When Massey isn't blowing the top off the last remaining mountains in central Appalachia, the company's burying miners underneath them.

But that coal disaster, the worst in the U.S. in years, has barely affected the practice of any mine operator. A crackdown in May by the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration produced almost 1,500 citations at 56 underground mines in nine states.

Assistant Labor Secretary Joe Main, head of the mine-safety agency, said: "After last month's tragic reminder of the consequences of failing to make safety a priority, it is appalling that these operations continued to flout fundamental safety and health standards." We have to ask, why aren't these mine operators on their way to jail?

What unites these companies? According to the laws of capitalism, BP was acting perfectly rationally. The company needs to maximize profits, and this compulsion, dictated by the iron laws of capitalist competition, will always conflict with environmental concerns or the health and safety of workers.

Trying to cut corners, lying and cheating are not aberrations of capitalist development unique to a few large and irresponsible oil and coal companies. They are ingrained in the system. The whole purpose of any capitalist entity is to make money and make more money faster than any other competing company.

The fact that the pattern is almost identical in the case of BP and Massey--massive corporations relentlessly hunting for extra profits, lax government oversight and little sign of a political challenge--requires us to examine the systemic nature of the problem, which is at the root of the global ecological crisis itself.

Our Demands

What should a rising movement for justice for the Gulf fight for? Here are some suggestions:

-- An immediate halt to all deep-water drilling. It's clear that drilling so deep underwater is impossible to make safe; we should therefore not do it.

We need to send a signal to the world and corporations that the U.S. is finally going to wean itself from oil. For all the talk about the need to drill pretty much everywhere, the reality is that half of all

oil recovered from the Gulf of Mexico is exported, giving the lie to the idea that these wells are making the U.S. energy-independent.

While Obama has declared a moratorium on new exploratory drilling, this only affects 33 deepwater sites--less than 1 percent of the 5,106 drilling operations in the Gulf, and around 5 percent in deepwater areas. We need to shut down the other 591 immediately, create jobs to re-employ all laid-off workers, and phase out offshore drilling altogether.

However, Ken Salazar has made it clear that this is not part of the Obama plan. In congressional testimony in June, he made sure to emphasize that deepwater drilling will continue, saying, "It was the president's directive that we press the pause button...It's important for all of you on this committee to know that word--it's the pause button. It's not the stop button."

-- Immediate recruiting of tens of thousands of workers, especially those laid off due to closure of fishing areas or the ban on oil drilling, to aid with clean-up efforts in the Gulf. These workers should be paid by BP at the same rate they were formerly paid.

-- Immediate removal of BP from control and oversight of media operations and any spill response outside of BP's efforts to contain the spill itself. This is, in fact, required by federal law. The federal National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan states that corporations cannot be in charge of spill response on this magnitude and mandates the government to take control to "direct all federal, state or private actions" and clean up a spill "where a discharge or threat of discharge poses a substantial threat to the public health or welfare of the United States."

-- An independent investigation of the government's response to the spill. There should be possible criminal charges or other sanctions against those found who obstructed a realistic assessment of the catastrophe or allowed BP and other oil companies to continue with their reckless practices.

-- A comprehensive energy bill. This legislation must reject the compromises and false solutions proposed by Sens. John Kerry and Joe Lieberman and encapsulated in the proposed American Power Act, and instead favor a massive jobs program based on energy conservation, public transit infrastructure and the construction of a new electricity grid that can utilize renewable energies, such as wind, solar and geothermal.

Such legislation could be financed by raising the top tax rate on individuals and taxes on corporations, plus a new tax on financial transactions carried out by Wall Street. Another necessary measure would be to reverse the billions of dollars in subsidies going to fossil fuel-based and nuclear energy production and biofuels, and direct them toward the expansion of renewable sources of energy, infrastructure and the necessary jobs to build the new infrastructure.

Obama went for expanding offshore drilling as a concession to try to win the support of Democrats and "moderate" Republicans for climate legislation. That backfired stupendously--Republicans are completely uninterested in a rational energy plan for the U.S. The more concessions that Obama makes to the right, the more the right will howl for more.

It's time to stop making concessions to the right. The only way that will happen is if a grassroots movement puts more pressure from Obama from the left.

SocialistWorker.org

Sport and the Working Class

Sport as an organized, collective activity has been central to human leisure and entertainment for millenia. Modern sports such as rugby and soccer were picked up by the working classes.

The majority of the followers and players of these sports still come from worker backgrounds but the commercialization of sport has allowed a creation of a 'ruling class' within these sports. These ruling classes are especially evident in Brazil and Mexico where many of the clubs are run by drug cartels. However it isn't only there that we find the ruling classes. The presidents of local clubs and international organizations such as FIFA or the IOC have made sport a profitable company, turning their backs on the working classes who helped spread these sports.

Sport and the Working Classes.

Both footballs, rugby and soccer, have their origins in the upper classes of society, who created them and created the first rules. The headmasters of the British Public schools "viewed football as a medium that not only taught discipline and team work but also provided healthy regular exercise for boys and young men." However when Saturday half-days became the norm, whereby workers got half of Saturday off, they began to look for simple sports which wouldn't occupy too much of their time. Rugby and soccer soon became favourites. In soccer a range of working class social teams sprung up, some directly associated with the workplace for example Arsenal and Man U or with churches like Aston Villa and Everton; in the north, Colliery Welfares were common amongst almost every coal mine.

Yet the majority of the players were only able to play in times of leisure, due to work. For this reason many clubs use to give broken-time payments to the best working class players in order to keep them out of work during games.

Soccer became professional in the 1880's and the Northern Rugby Union broke off from the governing body of rugby in 1895 by making rugby league professional. Rugby union didn't become professional in the U.K. until 1995.

Because soccer was the pan-English sport it soon became the favourite of the working classes with crowds of upto 100,000 going to watch the FA cup finals before 1914.

Sport and politics.

Hooliganism was a huge feature of English soccer in the 60's through to the late 80's. Hooligans tended to come from working class backgrounds and soccer was a form of liberation for them. Many vented their anger of the working conditions at the soccer games. With the mines closing down in the 70's and 80's, soccer signified a sort of unity they hadn't before seen and ultra groups were like a family who shared their frustration. Hooliganism lost its power with an improvement of working wages and after the Hillsborough disaster in 1989 which resulted in all-

seater stadia in Britain -this made it easier for the crowds to be controlled by the police. In another gruesome hooligan incident, which just goes to show how important the game is to some, Andres Escobar a Colombian soccer player in the 1994 World Cup accidentally scored an own goal. Colombia didn't pass the group stage and 2 weeks later he was shot twelve times, each time the killer shouted goal. Escobar was seen to be a disgrace to Colombian football.

Hooliganism took a much more violent turn in Yugoslavia. The gangs in the Serbian team Red Star Belgrade, had so much influence in the team's politics in the 90's, that they actively met with the president of the club. In one occasion the fans burst into a training session with bats and bars and beat up players saying that they wouldn't tolerate lack of commitment to the team. But the problem goes further than that, Arkan, one of the Serbian leaders from the Yugoslav wars made up his unit with hooligans from Red Star Belgrade (Arkan's Tigers) who were active from 1991 to 1995.

The New Zealand All Blacks toured South Africa in 1976. This caused 28 african countries to boycott the Montreal Olympic games later on that year. The Springbok's tour of 1981 also caused a huge upcry, not only in many African nations but in New Zealand aswell with protests in Hamilton, Wellington Christchurch and Auckland when they held their games. The Tour was opposed by Maori activists who saw a common cause in the African struggle and it's been said that it's been the closest the country has ever come to a civil war. Many Kiwi pro-rugby fans came into violent clashes with the protesters. The national image that both the All Blacks and the Springboks gave themselves ashamed many, but thanks to the 81 protests a full-on sporting boycott was imposed on South Africa.

National identity is hugely important in terms of sport. The national sides are seen as the carers of a national image, with the Springboks the national image was that of the apartheid and those who ferociously supported the bokke tended to support the Apartheid regime too. In terms of soccer it has always been generalized that national teams reflect the character of its citizens. This has been exploited by Mandela for the Soccer World Cup as it was too for the Rugby World Cup in 95. But rugby was always a sport of the oppressor in South Africa, so its success was more important than the commercial and touristic implications of this year's world cup. Soccer is traditionally still seen as the 'black sport' in the country, which is why it is hugely important to the nation. When the Bafana Bafana toured the country in early June 180,000 went out onto the streets in Johannesburg to meet them. The national image can also be seen at a club level: Barcelona-Madrid tends to represent the modern and multicultural versus the old and traditional and in Glasgow-Celtic games, Celtic represents the Irish and scottish catholic and Glasgow represents the scottish or Northern Irish protestant.

The Soccer World Cup.

We could say FIFA and the IOC own international sport. FIFA's international event is of course the World Cup, held every 4 years. For the first time this year it is being held in an African Nation. As opposed to the rugby World Cup in 1995, the soccer world cup

represents a search of new tourist markets. The truth is, South Africa isn't winning out. The major sport in the country is rugby and many of the stadiums will simply change posts once the World Cup is over, many others will become "empty shells in this pyramid scheme" as one South African said. In the case of Nelspruit, they moved a school, which is now located in shacks, in order to build the stadium. The IOC and FIFA really only benefit those nations or cities who have money. Even in Montreal it took 30 years for the city to get rid of its debt. The reason is because FIFA and the IOC don't give huge funds to the host nations, they expect the organizing to be done by the host nation. FIFA will pocket US\$3.5 billion in broadcasting rights alone. South Africa won't see any of it. After the World Cup people will forget, wait for the next one and hope that it'll be bigger and better. South Africa is a country with 40% unemployment, where 1 in 5 has AIDS and life expectancy for males is only 49 years. Moreover, when the South African government tries to promote campaigns for the country's benefit, FIFA disallows them. Due to the massive AIDS epidemic, the government put out a plan to give free condoms and advice checkpoints in and around the stadiums. South Africa was going to pay it out of its own pocket but FIFA refused. It seems Durex or whatever brand it was isn't an official sponsor.

Sponsorship is the big thing nowadays. In this world cup, a group of Dutch women were kicked out of the stadium for wearing orange: FIFA said it was all part of an advertising campaign by Bavaria beer. In the last World Cup the official sponsor was Nike, a group of people wearing Adidas tracksuits were stopped because of "sponsorship deals". The IOC does the same when it comes to Olympic games. These two international sports bodies have changed the face of the sports they are meant to represent. The Olympic games and the World Cup don't represent a world of unity but one where the richer nations take it all. New Zealand in the last olympics won medals in cycling, rowing, sailing and athletics. 4/5ths of the world can't even afford the gear to compete in these sports.

These sports have lost contact with the real world and the working class who actively supported them in times bygone. Wayne Rooney, after a match against Algeria said to the cameras about the fans: "it's nice to see your own fans booing you." "That's loyalty for you." Wayne Rooney earns 90,000 pounds a week. The average salary in the UK is around 30,000 pounds a year. Rooney is just an example of how international sports stars expect to be working class heroes when in fact they live the simple life.

Sport has stopped being a working class pastime. People are starting to realize this when they buy 5 pound tickets to watch Man U, It used to be 75 pence in 1983.

Sport is still very important for the working classes. Unions like the maritime union hold regular sporting competitions to unite the workers. Albeit, these competitions they considered to be working class were pool, darts... These competitions promote a gambling and drinking culture which unions shouldn't be promoting. Unions should promote sports like rugby and soccer and make leagues as a form of promoting union affiliation and inter-union, friendly competition.

Dan Benso

World Cup is not a celebration of unity

Millions of people across the world have their eyes tuned into the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

But behind the electric atmosphere, the bright lights of the stadiums and the singing and dancing on the streets, there is another side to the "rainbow nation" that the authorities are anxious to keep hidden.

On June 13, as Australia was being annihilated by Germany in their first group game, security stewards outside the stadium were waging their own battle to improve their appalling wages and conditions.

These workers have been receiving a measly \$US25 a day in return for 12-16 hour shifts. In response to the official slogan of the world cup "Feel it...it is here", the workers retorted: "We want our money. Then we can feel it." The government's response was to viciously smash up the strike. So much for unity.

This incident is just the tip of the iceberg. South Africans working in every industry at the World Cup have been subjected to similar treatment. Bus drivers, electricity workers and retail workers are all being paid below the (already unacceptable) national minimum wage and are being forced to work enormously long hours with little ability to resist.

FIFA officials have been able to get away with this by using labour brokers instead of directly employing workers, in order to cut out trade union involvement. This is justified by arguing that the World Cup is an event too important to be obstructed by trivialities such as workers' rights.

In the words of the chief executive of the World Cup organising committee, Danny Jordaan, "Although we have respect for workers' rights, we find it unacceptable for them to disrupt match-day proceedings and will not hesitate to take action in such instances."

Unfortunately for Danny, workers and unions have responded with disruption. There has been an impressive wave of strikes and demonstrations, including thousands marching on the centre of Durban on June 16 – the anniversary of the Soweto uprising. And although "Get out FIFA mafia" is a popular slogan on the demonstrations, the South African government deserves a fair share of the blame. They have chipped in a massive 33 billion rand to make the World Cup go off in style, including 5.2 billion rand for luxury transport infrastructure.

This is despicable at the best of times, but South Africa is a country beset by extreme poverty that is getting worse by the day. The sudden sloshing around of millions for the comfort of the rich and powerful has not gone unnoticed. As the Anti-Privatisation Forum has written: "Our government has managed, in a fairly short period of time, to deliver 'world class' facilities and infrastructure that the majority of South Africans will never benefit from or be able to enjoy."

It's not only the money, however. The ANC government is also working hand in hand with FIFA to repress workers. In preparation for the World Cup they drew up a "special"



Security stewards on strike outside the stadium. These workers have been receiving a measly \$US25 a day in return for 12-16 hour shifts. In response to the official slogan of the world cup "Feel it...it is here", the workers retorted: "We want our money. Then we can feel it."

set of laws including a prohibition of any strikes or protests within 1.5km of Soccer City.

And it was no surprise that when the stewards struck last week the government rushed to step in. They brutally attacked the workers with tear gas and rubber bullets. After seriously injuring many people, they then stepped up to offer their own police force as scab labour!

Countries who have had a stronger trade union movement than here, have been able to force their ruling class to pay higher wages, and more tax. The results of this show up in their productivity rate, and their capitalization rate.

The unholy alliance of FIFA and the ANC has served to highlight the enormous gulf between the interests of the post-apartheid ANC government and those of the black South African working class. The leaders of the ANC revel in the opportunity to mingle with the rich and powerful of the world. All the while, the people are starving.

This schism between the ANC and the poor black population goes back to the limited nature of the struggle against the apartheid regime, which destroyed the legal institutions of apartheid without touching the economic roots of the class inequality of South African society.

Since the fall of apartheid, black people have seen their share of the wealth decrease by 1 per cent, while whites have seen an increase of 24 per cent. Even this obscures the worst of it, as most of the benefits of the post-apartheid reforms have gone towards the new black middle classes who have taken leading positions in the state and private sectors.

These parasites have made a fortune on the deepening poverty of the black population, working hand-in-hand with racist white capitalists of Anglo-America, FIFA, and so on.

The glitz and glamour of the World Cup cannot hide the deep inequalities that still divide South Africa. One day events like the World Cup will be a source of enjoyment for all, but until that day, we need to fight to expose the dirty underbelly of this "world class celebration of unity".

Sarah Garnham



Thusi Rapoo

Playing football on stolen land

When the England football team play their first game at the World Cup in South Africa on Saturday, it will be on land brutally stolen from the poor.

Local activist Thusi Rapoo told Socialist Worker, "The England team is playing at a stadium, and staying at a hotel, on land taken from the people of this area first by apartheid and now administered by the region's royal family."

"We are angry that there is so much money for such luxury but ordinary people live in severe poverty."

The England team is based at the Royal Marang Hotel at the BaFokeng Sports Campus, near Rustenburg.

It cost £26 million and includes an 82-room hotel. Along with the zebra print furniture there are two swimming pools, indoor and outdoor, as well as a jacuzzi and sauna.

It's a far cry from the lives of Rustenburg's poor, who suffered under apartheid and have seen little economic change since the end of that vile system. Around 80 percent of people live on less than the government itself says is the minimum needed to survive.

The land was taken by white settlers and passed on later to sections of the black elite.

The hotel, and the Royal BaFokeng Sports stadium, were both paid for with money from the area's platinum mining that the royal family grabbed for itself.

"We have seen nothing for ordinary people from the World Cup," says Thusi. "We have been demonstrating this week to draw attention to the theft of land. But they say we can't have more than 15 people taking part or the police will arrest us. The authorities want us cleared out the way when the word's press and TV are here."

Amnesty International reported this week that there has been "an increase in police harassment of informal traders, the homeless, and migrants living in shelters".

The shack dwellers' movement Abahlal baseMjondolo (ABM) says it will set up shacks outside Cape Town's stadium to draw attention to continued poverty.

ABM deputy chairperson Mthobeli Zona says, "We live in dirty and smelling places. We have no jobs. We have no toilets. We have no electricity."

Socialist Worker (UK)

SAS: Thugs not heroes



The S.A.S, 'he who dares, wins'. Apparently, the best of the best, an elite military unit so badass, that they teach other elite units.

Supposedly they're a source of 'honour' for New Zealand, some proud patriotic symbol of just how awesome we are. We elevate members such as Willie Apiata to the status of heroes. In the midst of nationalistic celebration, many seem to forget why he was awarded the coveted VC.

He carried a fellow soldier to safety during a battle, risking his own life. While this is admirable, and nobody wants to deny that he has shown 'valour in the face of the enemy' one has to ask which enemy. Those he was fighting are never named. His mission has not been revealed. We have not been told why he was, now is there. And the same goes for most of the SAS.

We have an image of NZ troops being 'peacekeepers', nice, happy armed men who just save sick children, and have to protect themselves from evil, AK wielding crazy ladies in burkhas, as the NZ Army ads would have it. We see ourselves as fundamentally different from the US or Britain, and take subtle pride in how much we piss them off by not allowing Nuclear Subs in our waters.

This image is a fiction. A well-maintained fiction, and this is, in part, the reason we are not told of the SAS's missions. Because such knowledge would contrast too much with the useful fiction that we are given. Keep in mind that the SAS's mandate is unconventional warfare. This term is one that denotes a style of battle designed not to quell violence, but to upscale it. It is for the purpose of crushing the spirit of the resident population. To

force them into poverty, and to take away their civil liberties. To make a population despair of even the possibility of being free from occupation. This is what the point of the SAS is. A part of their training is 'counter-revolutionary warfare', and this simple title speaks volumes about their purpose. That they are there not to protect people, but to actively shut down an expression of the people's will.

The history of the SAS is a story of imperialist interventions and smug confidence in their ability to snuff out resistance.

In 1956 the SAS was sent on its first mission-Malaysia. Up until this point Malaysia was under the thumb of British rule. The communists which constituted an 'emergency', wanted their country to be free of British rule. So the SAS was called on, to defend imperialism in its most honest form. What a telling start for this group.

In Vietnam, the SAS gained its respect from the military world. Known as the 'grey ghosts', they were notorious for their ambushes and reconnaissance tactics. They trained and tried to get the far-right sections of Vietnamese society to fight on the US's behalf. While we have never had any kind of confirmation, it is not unreasonable to suspect that

SAS troops took part in some of the atrocities that were committed. They were fighting alongside US soldiers, and were there for a large part of the war.

In the late 90s, the SAS were involved in several more campaigns, protecting valuable copper mines in Bougainville while Papua New Guinea tried to crush the native people's resistance. They were involved in Kuwait, fighting Iraq's war, again below the notice of most of NZ. East Timor, where Aussie and NZ forces keep a tight lid on any popular movements.

So with this history it should come as little surprise when we hear the New Zealand Government sends 70 SAS troops, at a cost of \$40 million to Afghanistan.

Which brings us to what is perhaps the largest imperialist occupation that is happening today. Afghanistan is a country seemingly without significant natural resources, with little or no value to anyone. Yet almost 60,000 soldiers at a -conservative- estimate are within its borders. This is because Afghanistan has one important quality. Its position. It commands the easiest route from east to west over land, and this makes it valuable. Control Afghanistan, you can control most of Europe.

Of course, you can't be saying that you're invading a nation 'for god and country' anymore and so we create a whole rhetoric to convince people of 'just wars'. Let us make this clear. There is no such thing as a just war. We don't argue this from a pacifist perspective, but from a scientific one. War is a creation of class society, either between ruling classes for domination, or to crush a working class into subservience. So when America talks about 'liberating' countries, we are not fooled, we know full well that in the most part, the US places the tyrants in power in the first place. But we should be no more convinced when perceived 'good' organizations like the United Nations call for 'peacekeeping' mission. The engineers that are sent do not build bridges, they fix tanks. The first soldiers sent are usually highly-trained killers. There are many, many examples, and a surprising number of them involve New Zealand, and the SAS in particular.

Since 1994, Kabul, the -capital- of Afghanistan has been without water and electricity. Landmines plague almost every square mile of land, maiming and killing thousands every year. Literacy has plummeted to some estimated 4% for women alone. Afghanistan has been a humanitarian nightmare for over two decades. If we were so worried about liberation and humanitarian aims, why then did we wait until 2001? America's 'reason' for invading Afghanistan has changed over the eight years of oppression. Initially, they bombed the Afghan people supposedly to 'root out Al-Qaeda', which they had no proof of Bin Laden being anywhere near Afghanistan. Then, when that was up and over they turn to the Taliban, the people THEY THEMSELVES put in power, destabilizing with little government Afghanistan had and allowing warlords and drug czars to run amok over the population. Now, it seems we're returning to Terrorism, at least to explain NZ's part in the war.

James Gluck

Kashmir

Centre-point of Indian-Pakistan conflict

The region of Kashmir in the North-East of the Indian peninsula has been divided by two states for decades. It is controlled by India and Pakistan and finds itself to be the centre-point of the Indo-Paki conflict. In 1947, Pakistan formally became independant.

This brought about waves of muslims swarming into Pakistan and many Hindus and Buddhists fleeing into India. Kashmir's history is one of a secular state, whereby there is a majority of Muslims but very significant minorities of both Hindus and Buddhists.

Before and after the withdrawal of the British from India in 1947, the princely state of Kashmir and Jammu came under pressure from both India and Pakistan to agree to become part of one of the newly independent countries. According to the instruments of accession relating to the Partition of India, the rulers of princely states were to be given the choice of either acceding to India or Pakistan, or remaining independent. The Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh chose the latter and tried to avoid accession to either country. When British forces withdrew there was a Muslim revolution in western Kashmir and the region was invaded by Pashtun tribals from Pakistan.

Fearing that his forces would be unable to withstand the assault, the Maharaja asked for Indian military assistance. India set up a condition which said that the Kashmiri people would be able to hold a referendum to choose their future. This referendum has yet to take place more than sixty years later. India has repeatedly excused itself by saying that there has been no referendum because Pakistani troops are still in the country but we can start to see India's manipulative power with this ad hoc excuse. Whilst all Pakistani troops have to be out of the country, we can be assured that Indian troops would remain in the disputed territory to 'control security' during the elections. So if there were elections, the outcome would most likely be whatever New Delhi decides, which is what has happened for two decades especially. The current Kashmiri government and Kashmiri governments since the 1990's have been puppet governments controlled by India. Experts and independent sources estimate the number of Indian troops along the Line of Control at around 120,000. The total number of Indian troops is unknown but Kashmir is undoubtedly the most heavily militarized region on earth with some estimates saying Indian troops number 700,000.

In the 70's and 80's, India and Pakistan established themselves as nuclear powers. This has added to the instability of the region. During these two decades there was a serious threat of a nuclear



Indian soldier in Srinagar: Experts and independent sources estimate the number of Indian troops along the Line of Control at around 120,000. The total number of Indian troops is unknown but Kashmir is undoubtedly the most heavily militarized region on earth with some estimates saying Indian troops number 700,000.

war, especially during the second Indo-Paki war. Both countries threatened each other with nukes and still now, the armies of both countries haven't gotten rid of their nuclear weapons and haven't ratified any UN treaty on Nuclear weapons.

The region now.

1989 was a turning point in the history of Kashmir. The national Congress government rigged the state elections and, when large sections of the population protested, Indian authorities resorted to bloody repression which continues today. These events, chronic economic backwardness, and the rise of Hindu chauvinism across India, led a section of Kashmiri youth to take up arms against the Indian government.

India says that Pakistan supports and finances Kashmiri rebel groups. It is true that there are training camps in Pakistani Kashmir, however the Pakistani army has again and again stopped and detained insurgents who were trying to get into the country. India's presence in Kashmir is of course the prime problem in the area, the country believes it cannot leave the country as 80,000 deaths have been counted since the start of the conflict and it blames both Pakistan and Kashmir for them. They believe that they'll be able to cohere peace through force but we all know that this is impossible. The biggest problem for India is that if Kashmir becomes independant, India will have to face other secessionist regions in the country. The independance of Kashmir would create a balkanisation of the area. China will also find itself facing mass nationalist movements as will Sri Lanka...

This is the main reason why Indian forces have made such a presence in the area. On the one hand, Kashmir is a source of resources and tourism; on the other, Kashmir's independance would break the fragile unity of the country and will thus break its economic influence in Asia.

India's military government in Kashmir is repressive in all senses. Hindus, especially, are supported more than any other religion and strikes are often subdued with the force of tanks and guns. In 2002 one strike led to the deaths of 63 people. Nonetheless, the whole state found itself paralyzed as every sector of the population, including the police went out onto the streets for three days. In another protest in 2008 40 civilians died and hundreds were injured. India has also set up curfews in the state prohibiting people from leaving their houses for hours or even days. In August 23rd 2008, New Delhi imposed a curfew for 24 hours which prevented people from purchasing food, going to school, seeking medical care and so on, effectively paralyzing economic life.

Why haven't we heard of all this? Kashmir is one of the few zones in the planet which is restricted to journalists. Information seldom leaves the country and most of it is scarce anyhow. Due to India's power in Asia and the rest of the world other governments don't act. However we are talking about people's lives and freedom and if we want to see a more just world, it is the average Joe who's going to have to spread the word on this issue, make people aware and start international movements for people's freedom in Kashmir and other regions across the planet.

Dan Benson

Building a revolutionary organisation



For the past few years Joe Carolan has been an organiser with the Unite! union, and was instrumental in putting together the \$15 per hour minimum wage campaign. He is also a founding member of Aotearoa's fastest growing revolutionary socialist organisation: Socialist Aotearoa. Socialist Review caught up with him in June.

So, lets start with you telling us a bit about yourself.

I was born in Dundalk, which is on the border with South Armagh, an Irish republican stronghold. I had a punk band called "Death to Bourgeois Culture". I attended the University of Ulster in Coleraine at the age of 17. Remember this was while there was a war going on for national liberation. My mother told me that I should steer clear of politics- This was a place where you saw murals of Unionist death squads on your way to class. So, after one month at Uni I was involved in a Registry occupation on campus demanding free education! We held out for three weeks before the hated Royal Ulster Constabulary forced us out.

How did you come to revolutionary politics: what movements and political organizations helped radicalize you?

During the occupation there were fantastic political debates every night, the occupation was fully a untied front, there were heaps of different groups involved: Anarchists, Trotskyists, Republicans, Labourites and many others. At the time there were a lot of polemics going on. And these were not in some detached academic setting... There was a war going on, peoples arguments really meant something.

I read all the revolutionary press; this was before the internet, where you had to physically seek out revolutionary papers. There were lots of different papers: An Phoblacht, the republican paper; Socialist Worker; The Militant; and a number of different anarchist zines.

This helped me learn the difference between the different groups... and what I thought about those differences. For me, the Anarchists were weak on the

question of national liberation. Many groups were naïve about supporting calls for working class unity – not really dealing with the question of what this means when fighting imperialism.

A big influence on my politics at the time was hearing the revolutionary Eamonn McCann speak about Bloody Sunday and Free Derry. This was when I started calling myself a revolutionary socialist. However I stayed a supporter for a long time and it wasn't until I moved to Dublin that I joined a revolutionary group – the Socialist Workers Movement.

In Dublin at the time there was massive unemployment, and I became involved in the INOU (an unemployed workers movement). The government had set up 'community employment schemes' to try and tackle some of the anger. I started to unionize my worksites. Our union was the ATGWU, now called Unite, – it focused on the lowest paid jobs and is on the left of the Irish union movement. It was great changing the power balance in our worksites and some of the community employment schemes went on to become great projects for building community power. The community movement in Ireland as a result is a lot stronger, and has been to the forefront in opposing Government attacks. We rallied against the heroin dealing mafia, against water and bin charges, and built a real base in working class suburbs. That is now reflected by the election of radical councilors in the People Before Profit Alliance and the Socialist party.

At the time Ireland was still a Theocracy, with the Catholic Church holding massive political and ideological power. This all came to a head over the battle for a woman's right to choose. A massive movement was sparked off by a court case of a 14

year old girl that had been raped by a wealthy businessman in 1992. Instead of charging him they charged her with murder because she got an abortion. There were massive protests in support of the right to choose that ranged from marches to school girls breaking out of their convents.

However the right wing mobilized also with massive street marches that drew tens of thousands. A far right group called 'Youth Defense' organized the hard right wing Catholic fundamentalist bigots. This culminated in street clashes between 'Youth Defense' and pro choice forces, mainly socialists, on O Connell Bridge that basically beat them back. After this the numbers at their marches dropped and dropped until the movement petered out. That's when I decided to get organised and become a member of the SWM.

Why do you think it is necessary for revolutionaries to organize independently and what do you think the purpose of revolutionary organization is?

Well if you believe in a new society then you need to organize for that reality... its not just a dream – we will make it a reality. An unorganized socialist is a walking contradiction- I spent a lot of time testing the water, if you will, before I found an organization that best suited my politics. A revolutionary organization provides support for individuals – it provides a space for radical ideas where we can synthesise our ideas. It provides a space for democratic debate that we need to improve our ideas and strategy.

On the question of independence – there is no doubt that we need to be independent of the state and the reformist political parties. They are really a part of the system. Independent working class organization means that you are not compromised by reformist politics – it means we can always be there for the working class. However I've always put more energy into building the movements than into building the organisation. Movement building is first - party builder second. People join organisations that prove themselves in the struggle – only by proving ourselves do we deserve to grow.

Can you explain how, why, and when Socialist Aotearoa formed here and what political traditions does its activists draw from?

I was a long term activist in Ireland with Socialist Worker so when I came to Aotearoa I joined the sister organization here. I was involved in occupations at Waikato University for free education in the first few months of the Labour – Alliance government in 2000 to try and get them to implement the policy, which they didn't do. After this I went back to Europe in 2002 and was involved in the Battle of Genoa with a group called Global Resistance, which tried to make a common home for all anti-capitalist political traditions. This influenced me a lot. I think we have a lot to learn from other and sectarian bickering can get in the way of constructive debate. During this time I was elected onto the political committee of Socialist Worker Ireland where we were involved in many struggles including leading a 3000 strong demonstration

INTERVIEW WITH JOE CAROLAN

Pearse Street police station after May Day police riots. I was also an activist with the Irish Anti War Movement, forming student anti war groups Dublin-wide.

When I got back to NZ I got stuck in with the Socialist Worker people here. I was involved with Unite Union's SupersizeMyPay.com campaign and Climaction- an anti capitalist coalition against Climate Change. Socialist Worker was also involved in an electoral community coalition called the 'Residents Action Movement' (RAM). IN Auckland, it intervened quite successfully in local body politics- e.g. my partner Heather winning around 15,000 votes. However after this was when the troubles started. Socialist Worker wanted to launch a national organization under the RAM banner that was to be a broad left party.

Socialist Aotearoa was founded by dissident members of Socialist Worker who opposed that group's decision to launch the Residents Action Movement as the new party of the broad left in New Zealand for the 2008 National elections. We felt that this organisation was neither broad- it did not involve other key activists on the Left from outside the SW orbit in groups such as Unite, the WP, the ISO, the Alliance, nor was it particularly left- with many concessions made by leading members to economic nationalism, socialism being a dirty word, neither Left or Rightism, etc. Despite leading members of SW-RAM claiming a membership of 3000 plus for their organisation following our departure, they gained less than 500 votes throughout the country for the broad left option, that ran in opposition to both the Alliance and the Workers Party tickets. Although the founding members came from an International Socialist tradition, we soon attracted supporters from syndicalist, ecosocialist and other anti capitalist ideologies. We widened out membership criteria to agreement with five key points, which we called the five fingers for a fist, and ratified this at our Foundation Hui. We reject Stalinism and Maoism as the ideologies of dictatorial, State Capitalist regimes. We believe in Socialism from Below, and have a healthy, libertarian, Luxemburgist spirit. We got the blog up and running and started intervening in street politics where other groups have largely disappeared. The group has grown well - we are very open to new people. We now have a branch of about 30 members in Auckland and a new branch in Wellington and we are working very well with the International Socialists in Dunedin.

What has been the greatest success of Socialist Aotearoa?

We do not claim ownership of any of the movements we are part of... most of our good work has been in united fronts. One of the greatest successes of the left in NZ has been building the Unite union. The work that all the radical left did in concert with each other over the living wage campaign was amazing... the radical left has shown that together we punch well above our weight. I reckon the Labour party has less than 2000 active members, the greens maybe 200-400... the radical left is getting close.

Most of our success as revolutionaries has been not only preserving the flame of revolutionary socialism, but introducing it to many new young people in an exciting way:

Organising political forums, screenings and educationals both on and off campus,



Carrying out internal education for new members in revolutionary socialism

Interventions in demonstrations, strikes and protests,

Making posters, leaflets, badges, t-shirts and bulletins,

Writing for our blog SocialistAotearoa.org

We have been slowly joining the dots between the struggles we are involved in- for example last week, taking Palestinian solidarity activists along to picket lines and getting union delegates along to anti-capitalist debates- showing that it's a system of oppression we face. There have been some good interventions but always in united fronts, we never seek to hijack a movement for our own purpose - our growth has come natural.

What has been the greatest failure?

We do have many weaknesses: we are quite small, and outside of Auckland we are fairly non-existent, we have a new branch in Wellington, we also have supporters in Hamilton and individuals in smaller towns. There has been debate around whether we need a political committee as at the moment we have spontaneous democratic decision making from branch meeting to branch meeting - also possibly a need for a national committee. We were going to have a conference, and there were some good discussion documents written up but it never ended up happening. I would like to see a conference happen with a democratically elected and accountable leadership established.

While we have the Anti-Capitalist bulletin it is not really enough to carry out in depth analysis which a journal could do. However with the internet print media is less important. We need to encourage more members and supporters to write for the blog.

The Living Wage Campaign really tested the politics of a few members and it turned out that they weren't really anti-capitalist but anti-consumerist, and held some anti working class ideas. This was not really a failure at all actually; it has given us vital political clarification.

What do you think Socialist Aotearoa should do in the future?

We should grow, it would be healthy to have a hundred members in the not too distant future. We also need to support building the branch in Wellington and help our supporters in Hamilton and the Coromandel build branches. At the moment we have a relaxed and informal approach to

membership of Socialist Aotearoa- and that is both a good and bad thing. Good in that we do not have a cult like, oppressively dogmatic atmosphere around us, bad in that we have very little resources.

In any organisation, members activity and availability is constrained by material factors- long work hours, modularised and commercialised education, dependent children, time or financial poverty, etc. Socialist Aotearoa takes the words of Bobby Sands as inspiration- "In the revolution, everybody has their part to play, however small." Thus, membership for our organisation is open to anyone who agrees with the five fingers for a fist foundation principles.

We want to encourage more comrades to write for our blog, SocialistAotearoa.org, which now has a readership of about 400 different people per week. Articles needn't be huge or academic- short reports on strikes or protests we have been to, complete with digital photos attached, are vital to keeping the homegrown element relevant and up to date. Email them to solidarityjoe@yahoo.com

I would also like to see more cooperation between other left groups - maybe some kind of new left federation. In Aotearoa, we are closest to the politics of the ISO. Both the Labour and Green parties are moving to the right and I reckon there is enough material in the independent left, if properly federated, to provide an alternative.

However this couldn't be a front, it would have to be genuine. This could include left groups that have a proven track record- Workers Party, Alliance, Socialist Aotearoa, Socialist Worker, the ISO etc. Possibly left wing splits from the Maori party and Greens.

I would also like to see our ongoing work building the union movement to continue, this shows that we are in it for the long haul, we aren't just ambulance chasers. We are patiently and steadily building up a workplace army- the delegates and rank and file of a new generation- like the JB Hifi and Call Centre workers.

With all the uprisings around the world and the deepening of the economic crisis, this is the calm before the storm. Like in 68, small revolutionary groups expanded dramatically in very short periods of time and I think that as the crisis deepens and really starts to hurt working people we will start to see some big resistance. When the fire comes again, revolutionary socialist organization will be vital.

Free Gaza! End the Blockade!



On Saturday the 5th of June, hundreds marched around the country in protest against Israeli attacks on ships carrying aid to the blockaded Gaza Strip, and for an end to the blockade.

In Auckland, more than 750 demonstrators marched the US consulate, demanding an end to the blockade and throwing their shoes in condemnation. Around 400 marched on the newly re-opened Israeli embassy in Wellington, calling on the New Zealand government to end its tacit support for the Israeli regime and throw out the ambassador. In Christchurch, around 70 gathered in Cathedral Square, while more than 200 took part in a march organised by the International Socialists' Organization in Dunedin.

Israel and Egypt have imposed a land and sea blockade of the Gaza strip since June 2007, in an attempt to starve the Palestinians out and force the collapse of the Hamas government, which was elected in 2006 and assumed power in 2007. Despite international observers declaring that the election of Hamas had been free and fair, Israel, the United States and their allies placed immediate sanctions on the Palestinian Authority, later replaced by the blockade of Gaza.

The blockade has created a severe humanitarian crisis in the Gaza strip. As the blockade progresses, everyday items become increasingly scarce, leading to endless price rises and forcing whole sections of the population beneath the poverty line. The 'security buffer zone' imposed by the blockade has resulted in 46% of Gazan agricultural land being put out of production, resulting in 61% of Gaza's people becoming "food insecure", according to the World Health Organization.

Health services are stretched to their limit, due to difficulties in obtaining medical supplies, fuel for electricity generators and the repair of medical equipment. Palestinian doctors are also unable to

leave the Gaza strip for further training. Electricity to the Gaza strip is only provided for an average of seven hours a day, and was cut off for two days straight in during June. Most manufacturing industry has closed, and unemployment stands at approximately 40%.

The most recent round of protests was organized mainly by pro-Palestine groups and left-wing organizations like the International Socialists and Socialist Aotearoa. The Labour Party was conspicuously absent. This should come as no surprise – the Labour Party makes only minor criticisms of Israel's 'excesses' and is supportive of the Israeli government. Likewise, the Greens claim that both sides of the conflict are equally to blame, and are reluctant to take action in support of the

Palestinians, instead preferring 'official channels' that have failed time and time again to deliver peace or justice, while the death and misery piles up almost exclusively on the Palestinian side of the wall.

But a different tactic is needed. The state of Israel has clearly doesn't want to coexist with the Palestinians. It won't allow Palestinians in the occupied territories their democratic choice and engages in violent oppression when they do. Socialists stand unequivocally behind the Palestinians in their struggle against oppression, and call for a single free and democratic state for people in Palestine, regardless of race, ethnicity or religion.

Cory Andersen



Upon reaching the Octagon, protesters staged a "die in" to symbolise the ongoing death and destruction caused by Israel's blockade of Gaza

G20 protests and the security state

A massive police crackdown on protesters at the G20 Summit in Toronto last week ended in the arrests of hundreds of primarily peaceful activists. Canada's Socialist Project issued this statement of solidarity with the protesters targeted by police.

The massive police presence in Toronto over this week has been officially justified on the basis of protecting the leaders of the G8 and G20 countries meeting in Huntsville and Toronto.

We were told that the creation of the fenced-in fortress, the massive mobilization of police (estimates ranging from 10-20,000) from across Canada, and even the passing of a secret law on policing (by the executive of the Ontario government without reference to the Legislative Assembly and the opposition parties) that made it a crime to appear within five meters of the security fence would protect our right to protest as well.

This is not what unfolded in Toronto over the weekend.

Thousands of protesters marched peacefully on Friday, challenging the purpose and agenda of the G20, although completely hemmed on all sides by thousands of heavily armed police over the entire march.

On Saturday, in the midst of a larger demonstration (estimated at between 10,000 and 25,000), organized by the labor, anti-privatization and peace movements, a series of unwarranted acts of vandalism by a small number of protesters against stores, vehicles and buildings, was used as an excuse for a massive unleashing of repression and attacks by police against the democratic rights of both protesters and Torontonians as a whole.

(Like what happened at the Montebello Summit of North American leaders in August 2007, it will come out over the next weeks how widely the police had infiltrated some of the key groups--especially the so-called Black Bloc--knew the planning and participated as agent provocateurs.)

There seemed to be no real effort on the part of the police to stop the attacks on the stores. As well, none of the massive police contingents tried to stop some of the small groups from burning three of their police vehicles. It was as if the police weren't all that concerned with these actions. Reporters from European broadcasters and newspapers reported that this was totally out of keeping with any real concern to prevent violence.

The police then unleashed waves of repression against the legitimate protesters. This included those who wished to push toward the security fence--in an effort to challenge the militarization of the streets and demand that the G20 leaders respond to concerns about austerity and attacks on poor and working people; those who were simply voicing their concerns about the G20 agenda (with its radical



austerity agenda of having the public sector and the poor pay for the bailout of the banks); and journalists and even innocent and curious bystanders.

In one attack on a "free protest" zone (previously negotiated with the police) rubber bullets and tear gas was used, and people were indiscriminately taken down, beaten and arrested.

In all, by Sunday morning, estimates were that some 500 people were arrested. It is impossible for anyone to know how many of these were instigators of violence and how many were people simply exercising their right to protest. But clearly, the mass majority were only protesting and exercising their rights to assembly and free speech, which the Toronto police and the wider security forces have been systematically violating.

The temporary jail that protesters have been placed in is located at the old Toronto Film Studios on Eastern Avenue on the eastern edge of the downtown, converted into a series of cages in essentially a huge warehouse. The jail is described by inmates as a kind of Guantánamo North: cold, dirty and especially humiliating for those who were said to have refused arrest.

People have been held for hours without recourse to legal representation, of which there has been a large legal team at hand. Protesters hoping to provide some type of support for those incarcerated, have themselves been attacked, tear-gassed and dispersed by police violence, with several more being arrested.

Listening to the mass media and the interviews with the police and security spokespeople for the city of Toronto and the Canadian state, one would have thought that there was full-scale rioting and that the massive, billion-dollar spending spree on security for the Summit--that angered people across the country--was somehow worth it. As part of this, all protesters are being demonized, and the police are being portrayed as heroes, notably by the political leadership and Toronto Mayor David Miller.

The message of the protests (and of the thousands who protested across the week at hundreds of talks, meetings, protests and cultural events)--that the G20 meeting reflected the underlying agenda of the corporations and the political elites to make sharp cutbacks across the public sector, to impose wage cuts, to not raise significant (or any) new taxes on financial capital, and to impose new forms of hardship in the form of higher taxes and cuts in

benefits for working people and the poor--was drowned out in a demonizing of the entire project of the protest.

The ruling classes in the G20 were doing everything in their power to have the working classes pay for the crisis and their project of reconstructing neoliberalism and the political hegemony of the banks and financial capital.

The police and much of Toronto's political and economic establishment sought to use the incidents to change the entire discourse of the G20 week.

Socialists, of course, take their distance from the foolish acts of the few who confuse violent attacks and trashing with revolutionary politics. This is to substitute individual acts of dissent for the working class and the mass movement as a whole. It is the adventurism that calls forth the most violent features of the security and policing apparatuses of the state, catching hundreds of innocents in the wake, and helps justify the endless expansion of the security state.

To challenge the neoliberal globalization agenda of the G20 and overturn all the undemocratic exploitative relations of capitalism, we need to build a political movement in Canada, based among the working classes who don't earn their income from capital ownership, and who also are oppressed by the unequal relations of race, gender, sexuality and nationality.

At this moment, it is a point of fundamental solidarity to denounce, as forcefully as possible, the police repression being unleashed against G20 protesters. We insist that those incarcerated on Eastern Avenue have their full civil rights restored, and that civilian authorities take control from the Toronto Police Services of oversight of these proceedings.

They have proven incapable of protecting--and understanding--basic civil rights. The accused should immediately be released without charge, or be freed on bail and given the right to defend themselves in open courts.

The police occupation of Toronto should end immediately, and our full civil rights--and especially our rights to our city and streets--be restored. There clearly will need to be a full and independent investigation about the role of the police in the violence of the last few days, the role of agent provocateurs and plants in the planning of these events, and the astonishing violation of the rights of ordinary people and protesters alike on the streets of Toronto over the last week.

State and Revolution

“...if they do me in, I ask you to publish my notebook: Marxism on the State (it got left behind in Stockholm). It's bound in a blue cover... There are a number of remarks and notes... I believe it to be important”.

So wrote Lenin with characteristic modesty in July 1917. He was referring to what later became known as *State and Revolution*, one of the most important contributions to Marxist thought of the last century.

The short pamphlet was written in response to the turmoil that engulfed the socialist movement following the outbreak of World War One. Many socialist organisations that had previously professed to be revolutionary, and aligned themselves to the ostensibly Marxist Second International, succumbed to the nationalist hysteria sweeping Europe at the time.

The slow drift towards reformism resulted in 1914 in open support for their national governments and bourgeoisies. Where they held seats in Parliament, such as in Germany, socialist MPs overwhelmingly voted to support the bloodshed and mass murder of workers. This abandonment of principles such as opposition to imperialism and nationalism on the part of professed socialists horrified Lenin, and other genuine Marxists.

State and Revolution represented his attempt to reassert the Marxist attitude to the state in order to show why the capitalist state needed to be destroyed – not tamed – and replaced by workers' power. Such a restatement was needed not simply to discredit the so-called socialists of the Second International, but also as a guide to action for the millions of workers across Europe whose struggles against war and the accompanying deprivation were beginning to rock the foundations of European capitalism.

As Lenin put it in the preface to the first edition:

“The unprecedented horrors and miseries of the protracted war are making the people's position unbearable and increasing their anger. The world proletarian revolution is clearly maturing. The question of its relation to the state is acquiring practical importance.”

The starting point for his argument was the class nature of the capitalist state. Drawing on the writings of Marx and Engels, Lenin demolishes the idea that the state is a neutral body standing above social classes. Instead, he argues that the state exists as a means for one class to maintain their dominance over another. Far from being able to legislate away the conflict between workers and bosses under capitalism,

“[t]he state is a product and manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state

arises where, when and insofar as class antagonisms objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable...”

[T]he state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression by one class by another; it is the creation of ‘order’, which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between the classes.”

The arbitration system, the courts and the prisons, insofar as they legitimise wage labour and enshrine the property rights of the rich, are all examples of this today.

Coercion is also central to the power of the capitalist state. As Lenin puts it:

“What does this power [of the state] mainly consist of? It consists of special bodies of armed men having prisons, etc. at their command... A standing army and police are the chief instruments of the state power.”

Given the capitalist state exists to enforce the interests and property rights of the capitalist class, it cannot therefore be taken over by representatives of the working class and used to introduce socialism as the reformists of the Second International ultimately argued.

It must instead be destroyed and dismantled in order that the power of the capitalist class be neutralised, and the capitalists prevented from reasserting their dominance following a successful workers' revolution.

For this to happen, workers must become the dominant class in society. As Lenin

described:

“The overthrow of the bourgeoisie can be achieved only by the proletariat becoming the ruling class, capable of crushing the inevitable and desperate resistance of the bourgeoisie, and of organising all the working and exploited people for the new economic system.”

The proletariat needs state power, a centralized organisation of force, an organisation of violence, both to crush the resistance of the exploiters and to lead the enormous mass of the population – the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, the semi-proletarians – in the work of organising a socialist economy.”

So it is not enough to simply abolish the capitalist state, it must be replaced with organisations that embody and defend workers' control of society.

But such a state would have little in common with all previously existing states which have enshrined minority rule. The Paris Commune of 1871 provided an example of what workers power might ultimately look like. Marx described how:

“The first decree of the Commune... was the suppression of the standing army and its replacement by the armed people... The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of Paris, responsible and revocable at any time. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or



3rd Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, Petrograd, Russia, 1918

acknowledged representatives of the working class...”

“The police, which until then had been the instrument of the government, was at once stripped of its political attributes and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable instrument of the Commune... From the members of the Commune downwards, public service had to be done at workmen's wages. The privileges and representation allowances of the high dignitaries of the state disappeared along with the dignitaries themselves.”

The significance of the Commune and its contrast with the capitalist state for Lenin could not be overstated:

“The Commune [has] replaced the smug state machine ‘only’ by fuller democracy, abolition of the standing army; all officials to be elected and subject to recall. But as a matter of fact, this ‘only’ signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different type.”

Lenin also argued that a workers' state differed from previous forms in its transitory nature. Societies in which the ruling class relies on the day-to-day exploitation and oppression of the majority require a permanent state structure to ensure social stability and compliance.

Once in control, the working class has no social class it needs to oppress or exploit in the course of running society. Without class division there is no need for a state. In the long run there would be a genuine socialist society would be one without need for an oppressive state structure.

The main function of a workers state is to ensure the defeat of the capitalist class, and to prevent it from being able to regroup or rearm to destroy the revolution and workers' power.

As Lenin explained:

“The organ of suppression, however, is the majority of the population, and not a minority, as was always the case under slavery, serfdom and wage slavery. And since the majority of people itself suppresses the oppressors, a ‘special force’ of suppression is no longer necessary! In this sense, the state is bound to wither away.”

For the organisations of the Second International who had integrated themselves into the capitalist state and ruling structures in a way that disinclined them towards its smashing, L

arguments were somewhat unwelcome. State and Revolution was decried as Blanquist and anarchist amongst the mainstream of the socialist movement.

By contrast, amongst left-wing critics of the orthodox socialist movement of the time, including some anarchists, State and Revolution was a revelation. Syndicalist Alfred Rosmer recalled its reception in France:

"... for revolutionaries situated outside the mainstream of orthodox Marxism, for the syndicalists and anarchists, this... was a pleasant revelation. They had never heard such language from the Marxists they knew. They read and re-read this interpretation of Marx, which was quite unfamiliar to them."

The all too common characterisation of Lenin as an authoritarian by anarchists today is thus both ironic and woefully inaccurate.

Again and again throughout his political life, including in State and Revolution, Lenin stressed the conscious activity of workers as crucial to the struggle to create a new and better world.

In 1906 he wrote of his eagerness to see the working class "smash all the instruments for oppressing the people, seize power, and take what was regarded as belonging to all kinds of robbers of the people – in short, when the intellect and reason of millions of downtrodden people awaken not only to read books, but for action, vital human action, to make history."

The revolution Lenin lived through and led shortly after completing State and Revolution is a testament to this. John Reed, and American journalist who was in Russia during the revolution described how during the revolution,

"[f]or the first time, millions of ordinary workers and peasants found themselves able to participate in the major decisions that affected their lives. Control of the factories was taken over by the workers, land was seized by the poor peasants, the embryo of an entirely new form of society was created."

The official structures of workers power reflected this:

"[A]t least twice a year delegates are elected from all over Russia to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets...This body, consisting of about two thousand delegates, meets in the capital in the form of a great soviet, and settles upon the essentials of national policy."

According to Reed, "no political body more sensitive and responsive to the popular will was ever invented."

The contrast between the participatory democracy of the most advanced form of workers power ever seen and the oppressive nature of the capitalist state could not be greater. It makes a mockery of those who reject the idea of a workers' state, finding commonality between it and a capitalist state and condemning both as objectionable or authoritarian.

State and Revolution remains the clearest exposition of the role of the state and the need for the masses to destroy it in order to bring about a society without class divisions of any sort.

Louise O'Shea

Israel: The Hijack State \$6

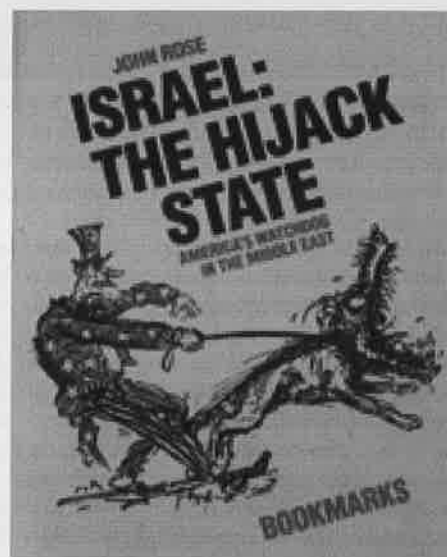
John Rose

Israel's "fight against terrorism" has been presented as a heroic struggle by a previously persecuted people against evil-eyed assassins and fanatics hellbent on murderous destruction of the Israeli state. However, the history of Israel suggests the opposite interpretation. The state of Israel was founded upon the expulsion of three-quarter of a million Palestinians from their homes. Israel's evolution has seen the increasing use of state terror on a monumental scale. This, combined with American backing for a militarization of its economy, has turned Israel into a ruthless outpost for Western domination of the middle east.

Capitalism's New Crisis \$5

Chris Harman

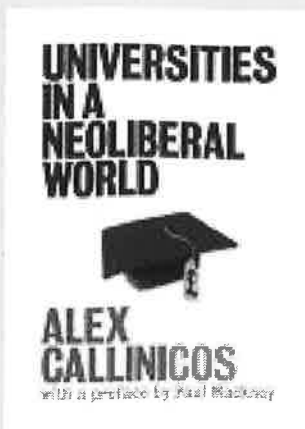
We are witnessing the greatest financial crisis since the Great Depression. Three decades of free market ideology are being torn up as governments step in to bail out their large banks. But is all this the result of the greed of the wall street bankers? Chris Harman shows how the roots of the crisis lie in a wider crisis of profitability across the whole of capitalism.



Venezuela and Revolution in the 21st century \$3

Joseph Choonara

Latin America is in the frontline of resistance to neo-liberalism, and Venezuela is at the heart of that rebellion. Hugo Chavez's call for 'Socialism in the 21st century' has inspired millions around the world looking for an alternative but has also raised many new questions: What dangers lie ahead? What role can Venezuelan workers play? And is Venezuela heading for revolution?



Prophet and the Proletariat \$6

Chris Harman

Chris Harman charts a course through the contradictions of Islamism, revealing its class roots and arguing that when the Islamists are in opposition the socialist attitude should be 'with the state never, with the Islamists sometimes'.

Universities in a neoliberal world \$6

Alex Callinicos

Universities are changing. Higher education is being harnessed to the interests of big business on an unprecedented scale. Those responsible claim this is justified by the needs of a 'Knowledge economy'. Alex Callinicos challenges these claims and examines prospects for resistance to the neoliberal transformation of our universities

The uproar over M.I.A.



What exactly makes the new video for M.I.A. so objectionable that the YouTube Web site took it out of circulation? asks Alexander Billet.

PLENTY OF graphic content can be found on YouTube. From executions by firing squad to clips of Vietnamese children covered in napalm, the blood and gore seem in no short supply. What might be harder to find, however, is the new video from M.I.A. The British/Sri Lankan artist, whose real name is Mathangi Arulpragasam, is no stranger to controversy. She's also no stranger to choosing sides. It's this that might have the suits up in arms over her video, but it's also what makes her one of the most important artists of our era.

When "Born Free" premiered on April 26, the Google-owned video site swiftly buried it, claiming that the official clip was in violation of rules that "prohibit content like pornography or gratuitous violence." A firestorm of protest swept the Internet in the days that followed. M.I.A. herself lashed out, and countless supporters backed her up. Though YouTube was quick to point out that "Born Free" was not actually banned, they have also "age-gated" the video, meaning that only 18-and-over viewers can find it. This, combined with a vigorous amount of "flagging" from uptight viewers, has made the vid a challenging find. Anyone even vaguely familiar with YouTube will attest to what a crock this is. Viewers can already find everything from soft-core porn to outright hate speech on the site, none of which seems to offend Google's "standards." So what is it that makes "Born Free" so objectionable?

The song itself, to be included on her upcoming, as-yet untitled album, is a full-on sonic assault. Listeners only familiar with "Paper Planes" may wonder where the Clash-era hooks went, and why they've been replaced by a thumping, buzzing, chopped-and-screwed techno beat. And while her familiar swagger remains intact, there is no doubt that this is an angrier, more frustrated M.I.A.:

*I throw this in your face when I see ya
I got something to say
I throw this shit in your face when I see ya
Cause I got something to say*

It's a taunt, in this case appropriate irony, directed at the forces that have resented her success. She's defiant as ever, but with a more palpable dose of rage. One might wonder whether the experience of seeing her native Sri Lanka torn apart in the recent civil war--and the corresponding genocide against the country's Tamil population--has had any influence on this. The video answers with an unmistakable yes. More short film than music video, it's nine minutes long--double the time of the song itself. Like any good film, the music takes a backseat to the action onscreen.

Directed by Romain Gavras, the son of legendary French left-wing filmmaker Costa Gavras, it follows a SWAT-like platoon of storm troopers as they raid an apartment complex in an unnamed city. The men, who all display American flags on their upper-right sleeves, are brutal as they prowl from dwelling to dwelling, beating innocent bystanders without mercy, shouting insults and epithets.

Finally, they find who they're looking for, and it's only after this nameless young man is shoved onto the bus that we realize their quarry are all fair-skinned, red-headed men. As the bus drives away, a trio of young redheads with keffiyehs wrapping their faces emerge from behind a corner, throwing rocks and raising their fists.

The shocking parallels continue. The bus reaches its destination, a compound that looks like a mixture of Abu Ghraib and the U.S.-Mexico border. One prisoner, a boy not one day over 12 years old, is shot in the head point-blank before the rest are forced to run across a minefield. The video's climax is a full-frontal shot of one of the redheads literally being blown to bits.

What starts as a straightforward satire ends as a graphic statement--and one that's unfortunately applicable worldwide. That repression of any ethnic group--be it Arabs in Gaza or Latinos in Arizona--makes about as much sense as rounding up gingers. And therein may lie the reason some of the honchos at Google took particular offense. As the Chicago Tribune's Kyra Kyles quipped, "Maybe the mistake M.I.A. made was using violence and brief nudity to make a political statement."

As for M.I.A., a refugee who was forced to flee to the UK because of her father's role in the Tamil liberation struggle, she comes honest by her outspoken views: "I do have a political background. I'm only in England, learning this language and building a life in this society, because of political reasons. Why would I deny that?"

At a time when music is becoming increasingly segregated, her work is truly unclassifiable, pulling on punk, electroclash, grime, hip-hop, dancehall and just about anything else she can use as a vehicle to speak out on sexism, the "war on terror" and poverty in the developing world.

All these elements have combined to make her face one of the most recognized and respected in

music. It's also made her an easy scapegoat. The "Born Free" fiasco is only the latest to be visited on M.I.A. by various authorities since the start of her musical career. A brief list would include the following:

2004: MTV bans her video for "Sunshowers," the second single off her debut *Arular*, after she refuses to remove references to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

2006: M.I.A. is denied entry to the United States, where she was scheduled to work on her second album with producer Timbaland. No reason is given for the denied visa, but rumors swirl that it is connected to her father's political ties.

2009: In the heat of the civil war, M.I.A. accuses the Sri Lankan government of "genocide" against the Tamil minority. Government spokesperson Palitha Kohona shoots back that she is "misinformed," and that she should "stay with what she's good at, which is music, not politics." The

New York Times labels her "an apologist for the Tamil Tiger rebels," despite her denunciation of the Tigers' tactics.

2010: More apparent visa troubles. M.I.A. reports that she is "Banned from leaving the U.S. family banned from coming to U.S. to see me baby..."

IT SEEMS safe to say

that few artists of her profile have had to deal with this many headaches. Just as telling as this kind of censorship, however, is the massive popularity she achieved, despite all the obstacles. *Kala*, the album she was almost prevented from making after the visa problems, is recognized as one of the best releases of 2007, and has sold over a million copies worldwide.

In 2009, even as the Times and Sri Lankan government were branding her one shade off terrorist, Time magazine named M.I.A. one of the "World's Most Influential People." In six years, she's gone from a virtual unknown to darling of the indie scene to a musical flashpoint of rebellion in an increasingly globalized culture.

If there's one thing to pull from the minor online shitstorm around "Born Free," it's further proof of the growing contradiction in that same culture. On the one hand, it's clear that those in power will almost anything to keep these kinds of ideas, this kind of art, from gaining a hearing. On the other, when people hear music that they relate to in a visceral way, there's ultimately little that can be done to stop it.

Anyone who thinks M.I.A.'s implacable momentum can be stopped by burying her video in for a rude awakening when the album is released this June.

First published at the Society of Cinema & Arts Web site

"I do have a political background. I'm only in England, learning this language and building a life in this society, because of political reasons. Why would I deny that?"

Detroit Disassembled:

America's decaying yet determined industrial heart

Jonathan Dodds looks at a new book of photography that gives us a glimpse into the destruction of an American city

For generations, millions of Americans looked upon Detroit as the epitome of the capitalist American Dream. They saw it as the unshakable, indestructible heart of industry, one which supported millions of people and strengthened the idea of the US as the world's most powerful superpower. But the dream vanished – leaving behind ruined communities, mass unemployment and poverty. It became a virtual ghost city on the fringes of forgotten America.

In *Detroit Disassembled*, Andrew Moore presents a series of evocative photographs of Detroit today – desolate and crumbling. US capitalism, which caused the destruction of these communities, fights to portray an image of recovery. But as the book makes clear, the poor and working class communities in Detroit, like the victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, have been left to rot. These two cities have something else in common – more abandoned properties and land than anywhere else in the US. Over a third of Detroit is now empty land. The mainstream press has failed to portray the suffering of whole sections of society. But there is now a new generation of artists, urban historians and photographers who document the decay of the areas in which they live.

The depiction of such ruins reminds us of the fragility of empires and societies, even those made out of concrete and steel. As the graffiti scrawled along the wall of a former nursing home on the city's 7 Mile Road informs us, "God has left Detroit". Huge areas of the city resemble a war zone. Many buildings are crumbling to ruins or are set alight by arsonists. These areas are then either



Detroit's devastation, as vividly illustrated in the book. This used to be a nursing home (Pic: Andrew Moore)

ignored or simply bulldozed to the ground, while expensive studio apartments spring up in the centre of the city.

Despite the lack of people as subjects, the photographs still provide glimpses into the lives of the people who used to inhabit the spaces. For instance a broom is propped up against the wall in the previously submerged Book-Cadillac Hotel, while another picture shows the melted clock in a former high school building. It is through this process that the buildings and houses begin to take on personalities of their own.

Looking through the images, it's also impossible not to stand in awe at the sheer power of nature, and its role in the transformation of the city. Trees grow in the centre of former churches, moss reclaims the former corporate offices of a major car

manufacturer, and plants invade through smashed windows into areas full of burned schoolbooks and furniture. It's this force that taking over the spaces left to decay by those who previously occupied it.

Moore does offer a slightly broader view of the city however, especially in the images that feature people. The young teenage boys on a street corner and the older man standing on a porch with his dog, alongside the images of schoolchildren and homeless people, show us another side of the city – one still very much alive. But as Moore points out in one interview, far from being a scary or dangerous city to visit, the people of Detroit have shown a resilience in their determination to survive and a pride in their communities that means life carries on. *Detroit Disassembled* is out now and priced at £34.95. Published by Damiani Editore

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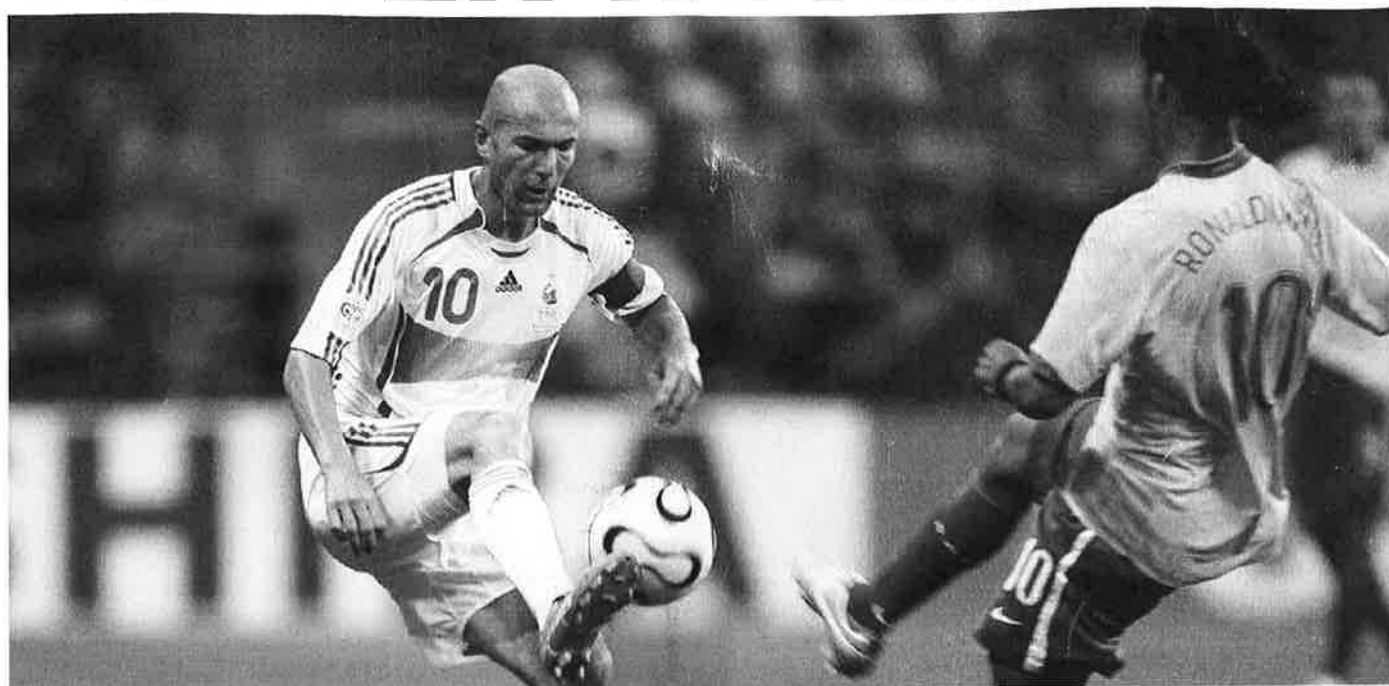
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SOCCER WORLD CUP



We could say FIFA and the IOC own international sport. FIFA's international event is of course the World Cup held every 4 years. For the first time this year it is being held in an African Nation. This is an honour for South Africa as the World Cup will bring media attention to the country and will again demonstrate how united it now is, how people have managed to put Apartheid behind them, now this is a proud nation of mixed people and so on, so forth. The truth is, South Africa isn't winning out. The major sport in the country is rugby and many of the stadiums will simply change posts once the World Cup is over, many others will become "empty shells in this pyramid scheme" as one South African said. In the case of Nelspruit, they moved a school which is now located in shacks in order to build the stadium. The IOC and FIFA really only benefit those nations or cities who have money. Even in Montreal it took 30 years for the city to get rid of its debt. The reason is because FIFA and the IOC don't give huge funds to the host nations, they expect the organizing to be done by the host nation. FIFA will pocket US\$3.5 billion in broadcasting rights alone. How much will South Africa see? None of it. After the World Cup people will forget, wait for the next one and hope that it'll be bigger and better. South Africa is a country with 40% unemployment, where 1 in 5 has AIDS and life expectancy for males is only 49 years.

Moreover, when the South African government tries to promote campaigns for the country's benefit FIFA disallow them. Due to the massive AIDS problem the government put out a plan to give free condoms and advice checkpoints in and around the stadiums. South Africa was going to pay it out of its own pocket but FIFA said no. Why? Because Durex or whatever brand isn't an official sponsor.

Sponsorship is the big thing nowadays. Also in this world cup, a group of dutch women were wearing orange and they were kicked out of the stadium. Forget that orange is the official colour of the Clockwork Orange; FIFA said it was all part of an advertising campaign by Bavaria beer. In the last World Cup the official sponsor was Nike. A group of people were wearing Adidas tracksuits where the brand was printed in big letters down the leg and they were also stopped because of "sponsorship deals". The IOC does the same when it comes to Olympic games. These two international sports bodies have changed the face of the sports they are meant to represent. The Olympic games and the World Cup don't represent a world of unity but one where the richer nations take it all. New Zealand in the last olympics won medals in cycling, rowing, sailing and athletics. Four fifths of the world can't even afford the gear to compete in these sports.

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